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#84

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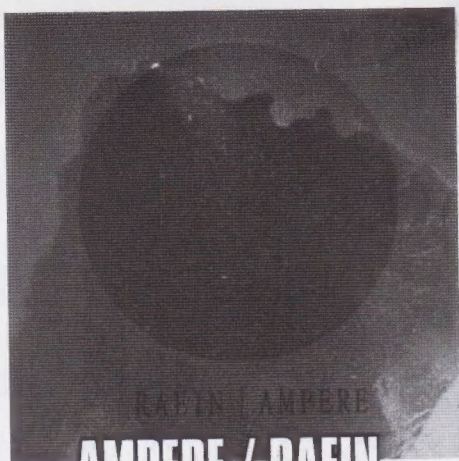
AZTLAN UNDERGROUND
PART II

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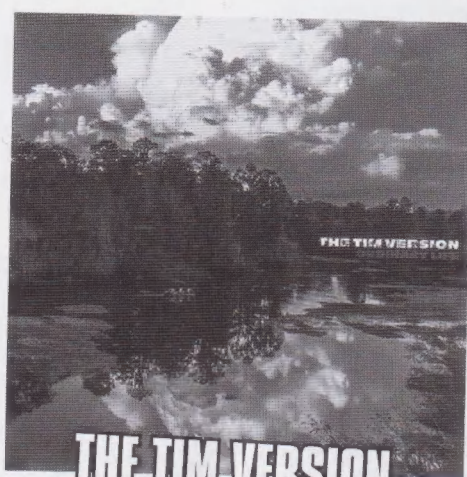




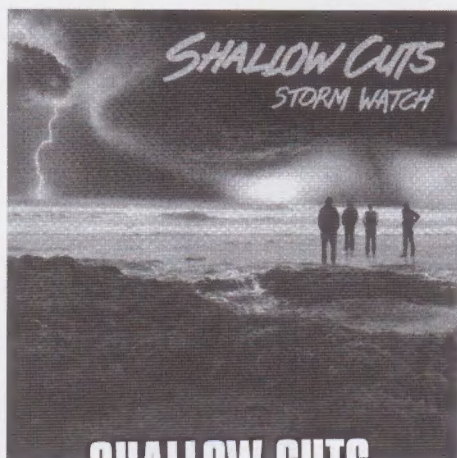
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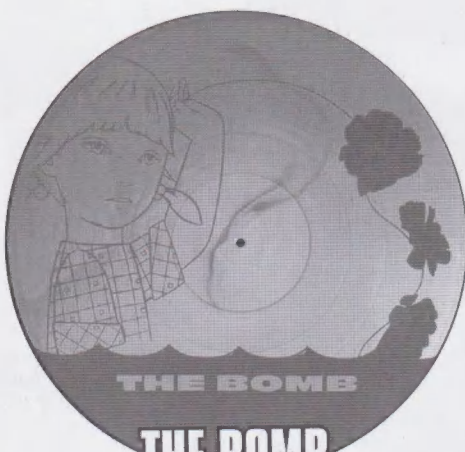
SUNSHINE STATE
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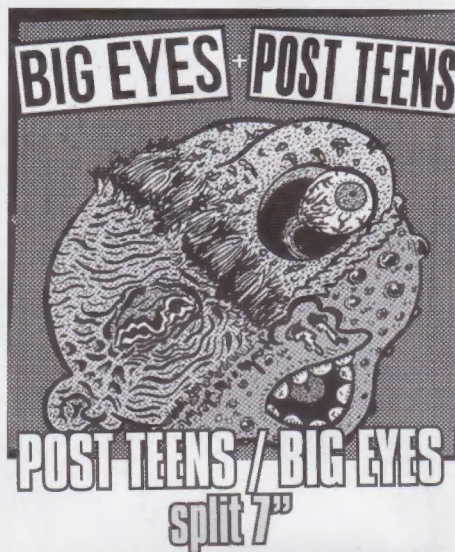
THE TIM VERSION
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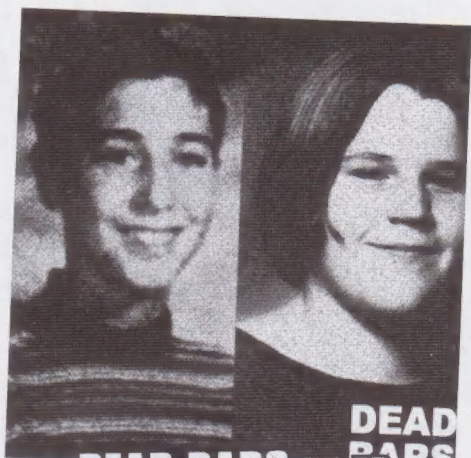
SHALLOW CUTS
"Storm Watch" 7"



THE BOMB
"Axis of Awesome" 12" EP



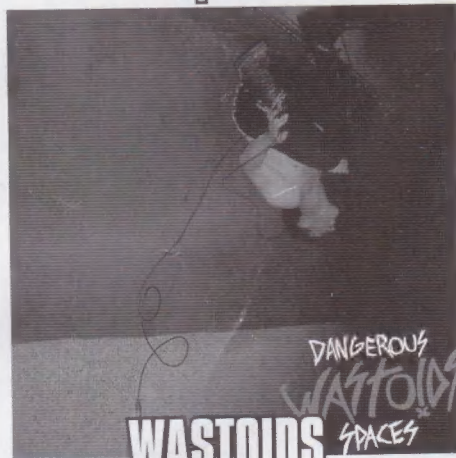
BIG EYES + POST TEENS
POST TEENS//BIG EYES
split 7"



DEAD BARS
7" EP



SUNSHINE STATE /
DEAD BARS split 7"



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WHO WE ARE...

Razorcake exists because of you. Whether you contributed any content that was printed in this issue, placed an ad, or are a reader: without your involvement, this magazine would not exist. We are a community that defies geographical boundaries or easy answers. Much of what you will find here is open to interpretation, and that's how we like it.

In mainstream culture the bottom line is profit. In DIY punk the bottom line is a personal decision. We operate in an economy of favors amongst ethical, life-long enthusiasts. And we're fucking serious about it. Profitless and proud.

There's nothing more laughable than the general public's perception of punk. Endlessly misrepresented and misunderstood. Exploited and patronized. Let the squares worry about "fitting in." We know who we are.

Within these pages you'll find unwavering beliefs rooted in a culture that values growth and exploration over tired predictability.

There is a rumbling dissonance reverberating within the inner walls of our collective skull. Thank you for contributing to it.

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A NEW YEAR, A NEW PLUNGER

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THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED OUT IN 2014

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Between Humility and Humiliation

As I mentioned a couple issues back, I've become a ghost. I've been working on a novel and am digging deep into the guts of Razorcake while still orchestrating the day-to-day of putting a bi-monthly zine together. I won't lie. It's been a dark, challenging time. I'm starting to feel like a ghost of a skeleton: barely there bones, a wispy suggestion of a skull.

A conversation Jim Ruland and I had recently could have put our relationship in jeopardy, perhaps ended it. If it'd happened a decade ago—let's just say he was still drinking then and my anger was seldom far from the surface.

I'd given the novel manuscript to two people—Jim and Sean Carswell. They're two of my best friends. We went to school together. I've trusted them and respected them as fellow writers for the past twenty years. The first draft of this novel was finished in 1996. They both read the new version and struggled to finish it. Before either of them said a word, I realized I still have a lot to learn. That's humbling after putting twenty-five years into a craft.

"Are you willing to re-write it?" Jim asked.

"Yeah," I said. "I just need to air it out for a bit. It's a lot to take in." He had read the third "finished draft" of the novel. I thought I'd pretty much nailed it and it was time to tidy the corners, do some light line editing, and start thinking about the cover and jacket copy.

"I'm glad to hear that," Jim said. "I've got a lot of notes. It'll take a bit to put them all together."

"I couldn't sleep last night when you emailed me that you didn't love it," I replied.

"A buddy of mine had a similar talk with another writer," Jim

said. "Good friends. They didn't talk for two years afterwards. That's why I gave you the heads up."

"Thanks."

"I thought that you might want to punch me," Jim said.

"Nah. I've just got a massive headache."

We talked for four hours. It ended with flights of tacos instead of insults, bent feelings, and bodily injury.

It's hard to hear from a trusted friend that a 782-page draft isn't good enough, that I have to rethink a core principle of the book. Fuck him because he's right.

It's fine if you scoff at this: I believe in the core behind DIY punk. I respect the hell out of writers like Jim and Sean, Liz Prince, Cassie J. Sneider, Cheryl Klein, Adrian Chi, Kiyoshi Nakazawa, Mike Faloon, Jennifer Whiteford, Jimmy Alvarado, and everyone in the thank you list right below, but I don't feel like I'm in any sort of competition with them. The opposite. I feel a kinship, a community. I want to support them any way I can. Oh, I can be competitive and ambitious and a righteous asshole—but with myself. I won't step on anyone's neck to reach the next rung, whatever it may be. The advice Jim gave me was hard to take, but it was given from the heart of a fellow writer who knows my strengths and weaknesses; not from any sort of angle to push me down, minimize my work, or benefit from my failure. He wants the novel to succeed on its own terms, not to poison me.

And that's the difference between humility and humiliation.

I'll start the fourth draft in a little bit. I just need to catch my breath and untangle some of these dark guts.

—Todd Taylor

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This issue is dedicated to the births of Ottawians Joey Marc Collister and Nicke Williams

Cover design by Nation of Amanda
(nationofamanda.tumblr.com)

**"Sometimes, if you
want to live and
breathe tomorrow,
you have to dive
into the black
depths today."**

—Neal Stephenson *Cryptonomicon*

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Todd Taylor, Sean Carswell, Daryl Gussin,
Dan Clarke, Katy Spining, Leo Emil Tober III,
and Catherine Casada Hornberger.

Welcome to the universe,
Imogen!

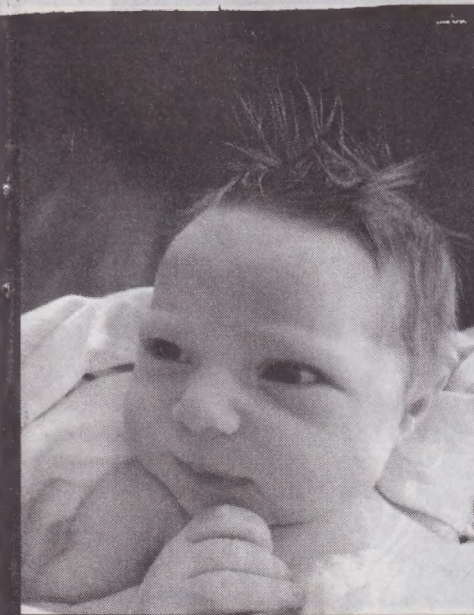
Imogen's mom and
dad, Jennifer Jense
and Jeremy Richman
are dear friends of
Razorcake columnist,
Jim Ruland. You might
remember his column
about going to Newtown,
Connecticut for their
daughter Avielle's
memorial service after
the shootings at
Sandy Hook.

Imogen's middle name
is Joy, and that's what
we're feeling right now.

THANK YOU: Such gorgeous watercolors, power of positive revision, full-color thanks to Nation of Amanda for her cover; I bet Hobbes would have a band just as good as Billy And The Boingers thanks to Brad Beshaw for his illo. in Sean's column; Photorealism of an illustrated world thanks to Marcos Siref for his illo. in Jim's column; Your worst fears are plentiful and staring at you four rows deep thanks to Steve Thueson for his illo. in Cassie's column; Thirteen-year-olds and twelve inches—"Do you know Rancid?" thanks to Alex for his illo. in Nerb's column; Dale baby sack—that's conjoined to a quadruplet of rock—thanks to Jackie Rusted for her Designated illo.; "I lost a fuckin' contact now?" thanks to Kasia Oniszcuk for her photo in the Chicken's column; RZA megafist vs. Nardwuar extendo-finger thanks to Evan Wolff for his illo.; There are fewer arbitrary, more colonial concepts that do more harm than the enforced law of "international borders"—the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo can suck it—thanks to Jimmy Alvarado, Andy Garcia, Jose Guillermo Cortez, Javier Martinez, Jeff Tsuji, and Eric Baskauskas for the Aztlan Underground, Part II interview, transcription, photos, and layout; In that bear trap between hardcore and pop—that delicious, toothy snare that Amos from Tenement is absorbing from the speaker thanks to Shannon Z. Thompson, Patrick Houdek, and Matt "Criminally Underrated" Average for the Boilerman interview, photos, and layout; Bask in the glory of a saddle sticher, an ergonomic razor cutter and... "eye contact when they put sausage in a backpack" (not a euphemism) thanks to Justin George, Andy Garcia, and Lauren Measure for the L.A. Zine Fest transcription, photos, and layout; Bike rack. Rack of beer. Coincidence? Sprocketed and cabled thanks to John Miskelly, Alex Daymond-King, and Becky Bennett for the "One Punk's Guide to Bike Touring" article, photos, and layout; Mattresses as sonic buffers in the living room and existential waffle talk thanks to Danielle Kordani, Gary Bonetti, and Eric Baskauskas for the People Watchin' interview, photos, and layout.

Zines are physical things. They are not blogs. Records are physical things. They are not untethered digital strings of 0s and 1s in a vast electronic darkness. I'm sticking to my guns on this one... Thanks to #84's rotation of music, zines, books, and video reviewers: Bianca, Claire Palermo, Kelley O'Death, Lisa Weiss, Nicole Madden, Sal Lucci, Keith Rosson, Rich Cockledge, Indiana Laub, Camille Reynolds, Matt Werts, Ryan Nichols, MP Johnson, Mike Frame, Ty Stranglehold, Steve Hart, Steve Adamyk, Paul J. Comeau, Juan Espinosa, Sean Arenas, Jimmy Alvarado, Matt Seward, Art Ettinger, Billups Allen, Mark Twistworthy, Bryan Static, Sean Koeppenick, Jim Joyce, Ashley Ravelo, Kurt Morris, Kayla Greet, Vincent, Lord Kveldulfr, Nerb, Garrett Barnwell, Chad Williams, Matt Average, John Mule, Michael T. Fournier, Jackie Rusted, Ollie Mikse, Simon Sotelo, Jim Woster, Aphid Peewit, and Craven Rock.

If you're a woman—or identify as a woman—who is knowledgeable about DIY punk, are good with deadlines, and are open to the editorial process, this is an open invitation to drop us a line about doing reviews, interviews, articles, or a webcolumn for *Razorcake*. (razorcake.org/contact-us)



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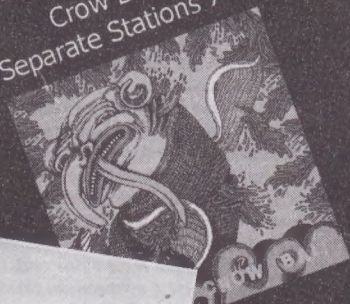
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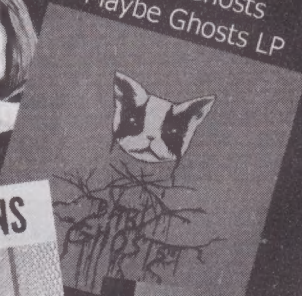


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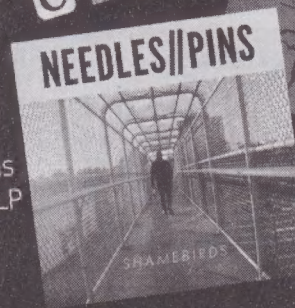
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Shamebirds LP



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Split 12"



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The following folks stepped forward to help us do our part over the past two months. Without their help, Razorcake wouldn't be what it is:

Todd Taylor, Daryl Gussin, Sean Carswell, Skinny Dan, Katy Spining, Candice Tobin, Kari Hamanaka, Matthew Hart, Donna Ramone, Phill Legault, Chris Baxter, Mary Clare Stevens, Robert El Diablo, Steve Couch, Justin George, Mark McBride, James Hernandez, Alice Bag, Marty Ploy, Rene Navarro, Billy Kostka III, Derek "Bar Patron, Girls Night Out" Whipple, Jason Willis, Janeth Galaviz, Rishbha Bhagi, Adrian Chi, Megan Pants, Alex Martinez, Jimmy Alvarado, Andrew Wagher, Matt Average, Ever Velasquez, Joe Dana, Christina Zamora, Juan Espinosa, Mezli Hernandez, Sean Arenas, Aaron Kovacs, Nicole Macias, Yvonne Drazan, Julia Smut, Jenn Witte, Dave Eck, Chris Pepus, Tim Burkert, Jeff Proctor, Josh Rosa, Toby Tober, Sal Lucci, Jennifer Federico, Jennifer Whiteford, Kayla Greet, Nighthawk, Marcos Siref, Steve Thueson, Evan Wolff, Cassie J. Sneider, Vadim Dozmorov, Bill Pinkel, Kurt Morris, Laura Collins, Nation of Amanda, Eric Baskauskas, Vee Liu, Evan Wolff, Bianca, Russ Van Cleave, Samantha Mc Bride, Christine Arguello, Simon Sotelo, Susan de Place, Bryan Static, Mitch Clem, John Miskelly, Jamie L. Rotante, Genesis Bautista, Andy Garcia, Camille Reynolds, Becky Bennett, Adam Perry, Craven Rock, Replay Dave, Adam Ali, Matt Sweeting, Chris Devlin, Codey Richards, Ryan Nichols, Kiyoshi Nakazawa, Ollie Miske, Aimee Pijpers, Liz Mayorga, Brad Dwyer, MP Johnson, Mor Fleisher, Ryan Leach, Brooke Mccarley, Tim Brooks, Patrick Houdek, Javier Cabral, David Crimaldi, Louis Jacinto, Chris Boarts Larson, J.V. McDonough, Isaac Thotz, and Cahnne Galletta.

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This issue of *Razorcake* is made possible in part by grants from the City of Los Angeles, Department of Cultural Affairs and is supported by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles Arts Commission.



A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG

SEAN CARSWELL

"Days just seem more fun when these songs get tangled up with my thoughts."

Darkness and Sweet

These Sugar Stems albums are taking over. I made the mistake of buying three of them within a few months of each other. Now I'm playing at least one of them every day. I can't help myself. That guitar is so clean and bright, it's deceptive. Those melodies creep into my ear and make themselves at home. I'm waking up with these songs in my head. I'm singing along even when there's no music playing. And the lyrics, well, they're something just short of sinister. They're mischievous like an old comic strip. Remember Susie Derkins from *Calvin & Hobbes*? She was the neighborhood girl who could always out-Calvin Calvin. Imagine she grew up and started a punk rock band. That band could very well be the Sugar Stems.

My second mistake was downloading the songs and making them available to Felizon. I burned her a CD and put the songs on her mp3 player. So on top of my incessant spinning of Sugar Stems records, I hear the CD playing when I get into my wife's car. She's playing the album *The Sweet Sounds of the Sugar Stems*. It's almost over. She's singing along with the song "Crybaby." Only Felizon has inserted her own lyrics. The singer sings, "Dry your eyes, crybaby, and have a good time." Felizon sings something different. She does it a few times before I catch on. I ask, "What are you singing?"

Felizon says, "Dry your ass crack, baby, and have a good time."

I laugh.

She smiles and says, "What? Aren't those the lyrics?"

I can't tell if she's kidding. And the kicker is, Felizon's lyrics would fit in with the rest of the album just as much as the real lyrics do.

Felizon keeps singing. I go back to what I'd been thinking about before "Crybaby" inserted itself into my thoughts. I think about the stack of essays I just finished grading. They were littered with punctuation problems. This has been happening more and more as texting and tweeting continue to gain popularity. People don't take the time to use capital letters and commas and apostrophes as much as they should. I don't drag out the red pen and put those commas or capital letters in myself. That would seem like too much of a waste of time. But I also think punctuation is important. We all know the old joke about the importance of capital letters. They're the difference between helping your Uncle Jack off a horse and helping your uncle jack off a horse.

I think Felizon's makeshift lyrics would be the perfect way to teach the importance of commas to the meaning of a sentence. "Dry your ass crack, baby" means something significantly different than, "Dry your ass, crack baby."

Maybe that's a mini lesson I'll bring to class next week.

The opening riffs of the latest Sugar Stems album, *Only Come Out at Night*, has echoes of Blondie's "Dreamin'." This is cool with me. "Dreamin'" is my favorite Blondie song, and I have no problem admitting I like Blondie enough to have a favorite Blondie song. Only, instead of finding comfort in an imaginary lover the way Debbie Harry does, Betsy Heibler's song is more grounded. She sings about the "miserable mistakes" we make while living a life "somewhere between right and wrong." The rest of the band backs her with music as happy and poppy as the sweetest Blondie song. This contrast is the power and beauty of the band.

Betsy sings songs about the reasons she only comes out at night. She warns you to "tell the truth before it tells on you." The Sugar Stems song about the ghost of a boyfriend haunting the girl who murdered him—which is sung by Drew (I think)—sounds like a response to "Love You to Pieces" from their previous album, in which Betsy sings things like, "I wanna hug and kiss and hold you all night, but sometimes when I do, I want to kill you at the same time," and, "if I could find a way to just hold you tight, I'd wrap my arms around you till I'm choking out your air supply." Because the guitar is so chipper and the drums are so upbeat, the songs put me in a weird mood. My id wants to roam free a bit.

The song "Some Might Say" is running through my head while I chat with a dean who works at a different university than the one I work at. We're talking about students with mental illnesses. We've both been seeing more of these kids in recent years. It makes a certain amount of sense. Universities have done a lot in recent years to increase access to people who previously couldn't get a higher education. There are now more accommodations for the blind and deaf, for people with learning disabilities, and for people with mental illnesses. Because of these accommodations, a lot of people who are smart and motivated but couldn't get a

degree in the past now can. This causes all kinds of new challenges.

I had a psychotic student one semester. He was a great kid until he went off his meds. He'd come by my office and lay out all kinds of conspiracy theories. He was collecting evidence to write a book, he told me. He was going to blow this shit wide open. Sometimes, he'd misinterpret class discussions for complicity in these conspiracies. He'd get agitated. It wasn't the easiest situation. I did my best to gently prod him into getting back on meds.

I had a delusional student one semester. She complained to administration that I had an evil eye. I spent a lot of time after that wondering just exactly what a person could do with an evil eye and whether or not it was possible for me to genuinely get one.

I'm working on it.

The dean is telling me about a student at his school who is a diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic. The student is convinced that the administration is infiltrating her brain. She can hear the radio waves pulsating in the classroom. The dean rolls his eyes and sighs.

I ask, "Is she failing her classes?"

"No," he tells me. "She's doing fine."

"Is she acting dangerously in any way?"

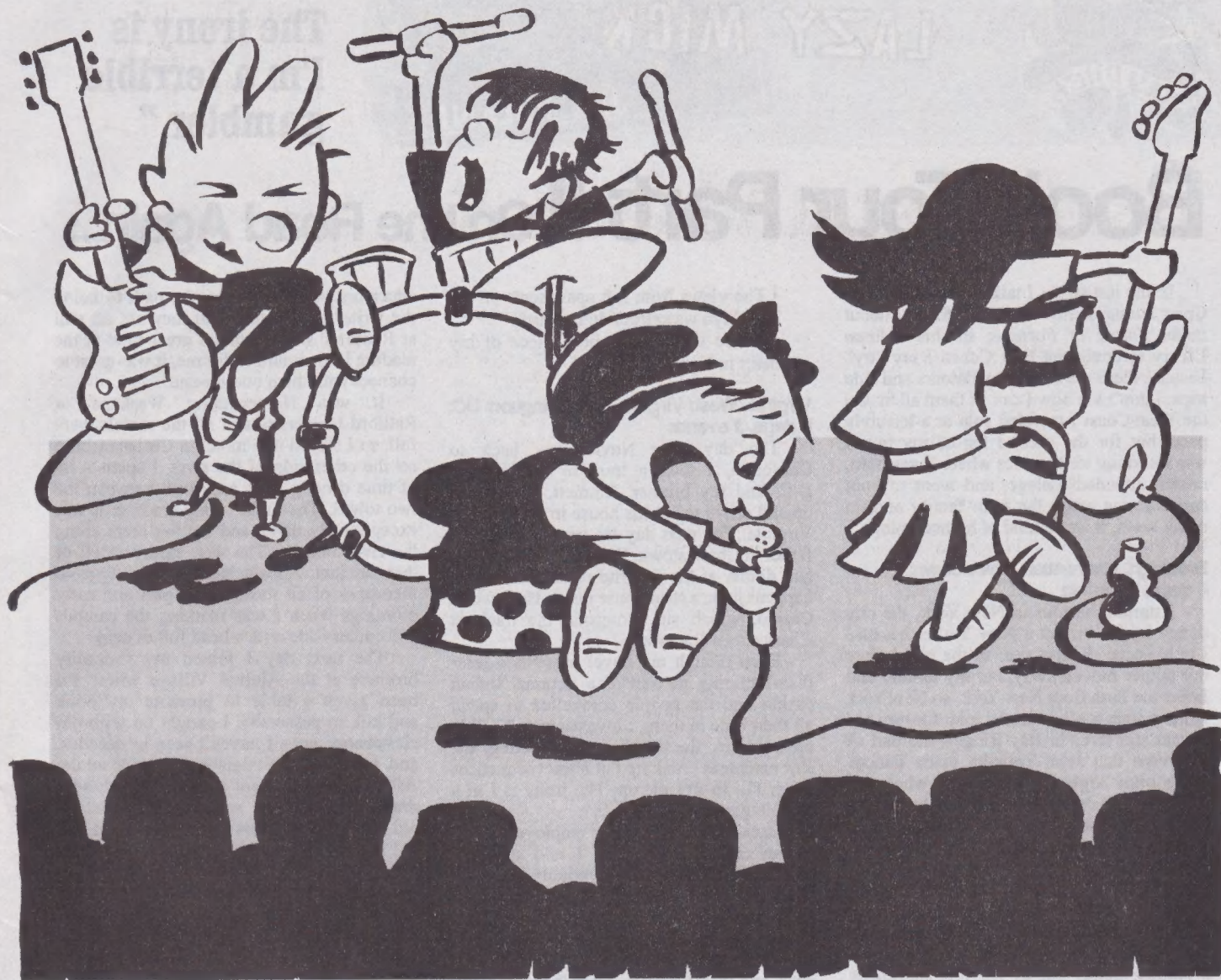
The dean shakes his head.

This conversation starts to fire me up a bit, first because I hate it when people who work at educational institutions complain about their students behind the students' backs. It typically sounds so narcissistic to me, like the whole point of the conversations is, "Ugh, I'm surrounded by idiots." Boring.

The dean's complaint also fires me up because he's way too uptight and judgmental about mental illness. If the kid can pass her classes, then the dean needs to lighten up. He needs to see mental illness the way he'd view any other obstacle beyond the student's power. To me, rolling your eyes about schizophrenia is like rolling your eyes because someone is in a wheel chair: "You wouldn't believe this kid. He won't even walk on his feet. He put fucking wheels on his chair so he doesn't have to stand up." Roll eyes. Sigh.

What's really behind the dean's complaints is fear. He fears mental illness. The way to deal with that is understanding. Talk to the woman. Get to know her. Encourage her to stick with her medication. Offer her help, if she wants it. Find the right places to take her to get that help.

I don't say any of this. I have a head full of Sugar Stems. I'm feeling mischievous. I



BRAD BESHAW

Remember Susie Derkins from *Calvin & Hobbes*? Imagine she grew up and started a punk rock band.

say to the dean, "Have you thought about turning off the radio waves?"

"She's schizophrenic," he says, as if he doesn't realize that I'm fucking with him.

I say, "All the more reason to stop infiltrating her brain."

Betsy sings in my head: "*Some might say the things in my brain are fictional. But we're one step away from disaster. It doesn't matter, no.*"

I drop the needle on the first song of the Sugar Stems *Can't Wait* album. "Greatest Pretender." It's not even the

lyrics so much as the feel of the record. It's dark and sweet. The contradictions turn into harmonies. This is the balance I've been searching for lately. I'm a blue collar guy living in a white collar world. I grew up a carpenter and now I'm a literature professor. I see myself as a punk rocker, but I often have to work with administration to determine who gets hired and when kids get kicked out of school. These battles rage inside of me, conflicts between my identity and my actions, clashes between what I want to do and what I should. Sometimes the

best part of my day comes when I catch a smart ass comment just before it slips off my tongue. Sometimes my best days come when that smart ass comment slips out, anyway.

These Sugar Stems songs don't calm the conflicts inside. They don't teach me right and wrong or genuinely impact the way I act. Days just seem more fun when these songs get tangled up with my thoughts.

—Sean Carswell



RAZORCAKE 07



LAZY MICK

JIM RULAND

**"I love casinos.
The irony is
I'm a terrible
gambler."**

Book Tour Part II On the Road Again...

In the last issue, I talked about the West Coast swing of my book tour for my debut novel *Forest of Fortune*; in this column I'll try to cover the East Coast. I say "try" because there were so many detours and side trips, I don't see how I can fit them all in. On the West Coast I traveled solo at a leisurely pace, but for the second leg of my tour I was returning to the cities where I was born, raised, attended college, and went to boot camp. I was never far from family and, in many ways, it was a kind of homecoming.

Brooklyn, Manhattan & Newtown 4 days, 1 reading

I started the tour in New York, the city of my birth. I'm not a New Yorker because I only spent about a year in the city before my family moved away, but my mother and father are both from New York, so New York is more than a place on the map for me. My cousin still lives in Bay Ridge—the part of Brooklyn that John Travolta made famous in *Saturday Night Fever*. It's also where my mother was born and raised. The bar where my grandfather, Pinchy Flanagan, used to work is just a couple blocks from my cousin Noreen's house on Colonial Avenue.

Bay Ridge is a long way from the city, but to me it's the heart of New York, so it was great to kick off my tour in Williamsburg where Brooklyn writer Jami Attenberg runs a reading series out of her loft apartment. Writers read their work and then everyone goes up to the roof and oohs and aahs at the sunset. Jami and I invited Brooklyn novelists Adam Johnson and D Foy, Chicago firebrand Lindsay Hunter, and SoCal memoirist and former sex worker Antonia Crane, most of whom are all friends. Plus, my wife Nuvia and my cousins Noreen and Anthony were in the audience. Very cool to be 3,000+ miles from home and have the opportunity to read in front of so many familiar faces.

The rest of the trip was spent doing very New York things: going to a Giants football game, riding the subway, eating Brooklyn pizza, breaking bread with friends in diners and cafes. Nuvia and I even squeezed in a trip to Newtown to visit our dear friends Jeremy and Jenn (See "Notes on Grief" in issue #73) a few days before the arrival of their new baby Imogen.

What I learned:

- That Brooklyn pizza rules the universe is a lesson worth learning over and over again.

- The views from loft apartments on the Brooklyn waterfront do not suck.
- There will always be a piece of my heart in Newtown.

Virginia, West Virginia & Washington DC: 5 days, 3 events

The day after Nuvia flew back to California, I took a train to Washington, D.C. and my brother, Emmett, picked me up and drove me to his house in Haymarket, Virginia. The next day we went to visit my father in Charlestown, West Virginia, and we had dinner at his favorite restaurant, which happens to be a steakhouse inside Hollywood Casino, which sits alongside the track at Charlestown Raceways.

Even though my novel presents a less-than-flattering portrait of a fictional Indian casino and the people compelled to spend all their time in them, I love casinos. The big open spaces, the psychedelic carpeting, the slot machines cranking out attract sequences never fail to fire me up. The irony is I'm a terrible gambler.

Back when I was an employee at an Indian casino, every time I told someone where I worked I would invariably get asked if I was a blackjack dealer. It happened with such frequency, that I put it in my book as a kind of joke because I really suck at blackjack. My father and my brother, however, do not suck, and their winnings more than offset my meager losses. My seventy-year-old father did so well that he attracted the attention of what I'll charitably call a lady of the evening, which was as hilarious as it sounds.

The next day I borrowed my brother's car and drove to Radford, Virginia, where I went to college. I attended Radford immediately after I got out of the Navy. It was the only college in Virginia that would take me. Radford had a reputation as a party school and I did my part to legitimize the claim. While I was very serious about my studies, during my first year at Radford I was a bit at sea. I partied my ass off, joined a fraternity, and took gross quantities of LSD. I was always up for going on a trip.

During the course of my self-directed studies in enlightenment, I received a great deal of individual attention from several members of the English department: Tim Poland turned me on to Jack Kerouac and the Beats, Lou Gallo encouraged my early efforts as a fiction writer, and Jolanta Wawrzycka introduced me to James Joyce. These are the

educators who put me on the path to being the writer I am today, and they are all still at Radford. While I had a great time at the reading Lou organized for me, it was great to connect with them one-on-one.

It was Homecoming Weekend at Radford University and all the motels were full, so I stayed in a motel in Christiansburg on the other side of the river. I spent a lot of time driving back and forth between the two towns. The night of my reading, it was exceptionally damp and the fog crept along the river bottom. The wet, earthy smell of that ancient Appalachian River triggered memories of all those late nights and early mornings when I was roaming the campus and countryside with a head full of acid.

The next day I joined my fraternity brothers at the Alumni Village where I'd been given a table to promote my book and talk to passersby. I caught up with old classmates, guys I haven't seen in decades, and rode that nostalgia train for a while. Afterwards, we went to the bar where I drank red bull and soda water while my old drinking partners got sloshed. As my old mates slowly started to disappear I got to know a lot of the new members of the fraternity, many of whom were curious to know what the hell an old sober tattooed punk rocker was doing in their midst. We shared stories. They invited me back to the fraternity house where two amazing things happened: 1) I was asked to do an impromptu reading and 2) I was offered LSD. I accepted the former and declined the latter and the reading I gave to a roomful of enthusiastic frat guys and sorority girls may well have been the highlight of the trip. Who says you can't go home again?

On Sunday night I drove back to Virginia and that night my brother and I went into Washington DC for the Three Tents reading series at a bar called The Big Hunt. I had the pleasure of reading with old friends Pamela Erens and Roy Kesey and new friend Sarah Lippman, whose grandmother is from Bay Ridge. The next day my brother and I played touch football with his two sons Trevor and Casey, and I managed to injure my ankle in seventeen different places. Thankfully, I'd brought my Doctor Marten orthopedic shoes and I was able to finish the tour.

What I learned:

- I still suck at blackjack.
- My old man still has game.
- I'm still thinking about that tab of acid.



MARCOS SIREF

I partied my ass off, joined a fraternity, and took gross quantities of LSD. I was always up for going on a trip.

Indiana & Illinois: 4 days, 1 event

After a quick visit with my sister Meghan, I flew out to Indianapolis. My mother spends half the year living with my brother in Haymarket and half in Kewanna, Indiana, a tiny little town inside a township in the heart of the heart of the country. My mother had been going out to Kewanna for painting workshops for years, and she was so smitten by the quaint town and cheap real estate that she bought a house there.

Before we headed to Kewanna, we paid a visit to the Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library in Indianapolis. It's not that I had a burning desire to see the place, but my mother is a terrible driver and I was terrified of getting on the road with her. When I used to teach composition, I used to give my students an essay I'd written that had all the common mistakes and easy errors that beginning writing students make. I didn't want my students to think I was making fun of them, so I made the content of the essay more ludicrous than the writing: it's about a trip I

took to Ireland with my mother and the many times I nearly died on the motorways.

Thankfully, we made it to Kewanna without causing a minor calamity. No one died and we only screamed at each other a little bit. I was expecting something modest, but her house—an old Victorian home with a confusing layout—was enormous. I kept taking wrong turns and mistaking closets for passageways like Mr. Earbrass in Edward Gorey's *The Unstrung Harp*. My mother lives in "downtown" Kewanna across from the post office and next to the library but most of the other buildings in town are boarded up and abandoned. During one of my morning walks, I was followed by a lonely stray cat and stumbled upon "Aryan Brotherhood" graffiti.

After a few days we drove to Chicago and checked into a downtown hotel right on Lake Michigan. My memories of Chicago aren't pleasant: I went to Navy boot camp in the middle of winter at a desolate stretch of Illinois marshland a few miles up the coast, and I still haven't forgiven Chicago for the harshness of those months.

I was participating in an event called Words + Music with a showcase of writers from Chicago indie press Curbside Splendor: Erika Wurth, James Tadd Adcox, Susan Hope Lanier, Cassandra Troyan and hosted by Jacob Knabb, an indispensable fixture on the indie lit scene. I was one of the featured guests with old friend Joe Meno. I'd sold the last of my books at my reading in Washington DC so I decided to make my mother proud by telling a story from my boot camp days about the time a Navy cook invited me to have sex with a hot hunk of roast beef.

What I learned:

- Kurt Vonnegut was not a happy fellow.
- I don't hate Chicago anymore.
- I wouldn't trade my sports-loving, gambling-addicted, hard-partying, bad-driving family for anything in the world.

—Jim Ruland

OVER THE YEARS I'VE FOUND MYSELF IN THE POSITION OF HAVING TO POOP IN A WEIRD PLACE.

WEIRD POOPS

THIS COMIC WAS INSPIRED BY MAX MEEHAN. THANKS MAX!!

A FEW TIMES, WHILE OUT WALKING LATE AT NIGHT, I'VE HAD TO POOP IN A DITCH.



THERE WAS THE TIME I POOPED IN THE PARKING LOT OF A ROLLER RINK



I ONCE POOPED BEHIND A DUMPSTER AT A PARTY.



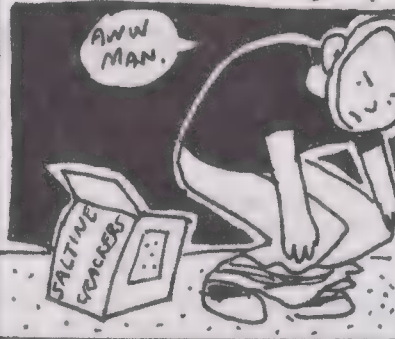
... LATER THAT NIGHT I OVERHEARD...



ONCE ON TOUR WE WERE BROKEN DOWN ON THE SIDE OF THE HIGHWAY, WAITING FOR A TOW TRUCK.



... I HAD TO POOP IN A CARDBOARD BOX.



YOU MAY REMEMBER THE COMIC I DREW A FEW YEARS AGO ABOUT POOPING MY PANTS IN ITALY...



I'VE POOPED MY PANTS A FEW OTHER TIMES AS WELL.



ONCE AT A TEMP JOB, WHILE MOVING A FILE CABINET DOWN A HALLWAY.



AND ONCE WHEN I WAS LOCKED OUT OF MY HOUSE, TRYING TO GET IN.




NO MATTER HOW OLD YOU ARE, POOP IS ALWAYS FUNNY.





Shanty Cheryl's Photo Page

Sarah Ulter at Western Hymn, Babes Warehouse, Long Beach, CA



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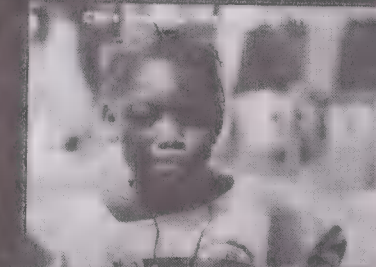
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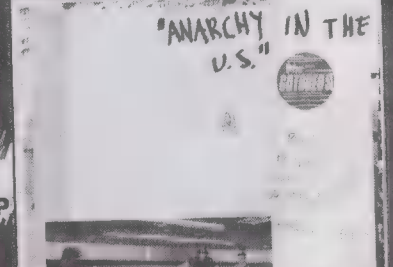
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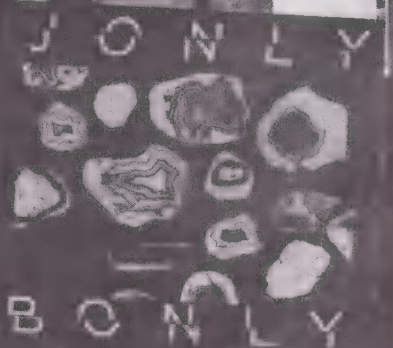
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When I was younger, I was such a tomboy that I hated girls.

Liz isn't like other girls: she's cool.



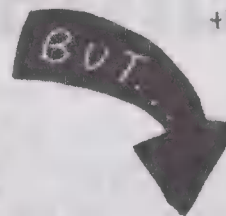
Being "not like other girls" became a compliment I held dearly.

Because girls suck.



Number of times I've been told I'm "not like other girls" as a compliment?

A. Probably almost a thousand.



I'd always wanted to be one of the guys. It's a relief that I'm not.

Other girls are so caught up on labels, you're better than that.

I am?



Being straight meant that I wanted to date dudes, too...

Uh, I don't want to ruin our friendship.



When I started dating in college, I was excited to get flaky.

I thought you were different, guess you're just a GIRL after all.

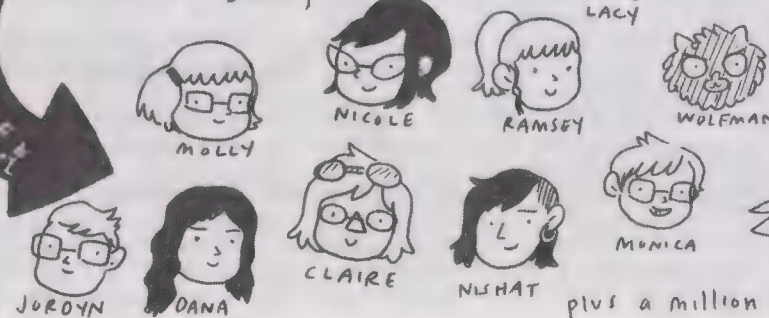
we shouldn't hang out anymore.



And I was finally able to see it as the insult that it is.

That being othered from high schoolers seemed like a good thing.

I'd made so many awesome, inspiring friends who are girls,



plus a million others...



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SUCCESS!

CASSIE J. SNEIDER

**"Jenny was used
to a constant
open-season of
humiliation."**

Radioactive Nuts

I had a crush on an underclassman named Lou Federbaum when I was a senior in high school. Most of my crushes were on older dudes: Bono, Dickie Barrett, and even Steven Tyler in a disturbing "Craigslist casual encounter with ■ grandmother who owns a tanning bed"-sort of way. But Lou had chest hair, played guitar, and worked full time at Kmart, something my teenage brain was really intrigued by. His musical taste was the first of many pretentious indie rock dudes I would come to know in my life: Weezer, Elliott Smith, The Beatles. These were on ■ permanent rotation on his Discman in our student leadership class, and I had never listened to any of them. I listened to a lot of ska. I hated my parents, so I never got into The Beatles. I loved the Bouncing Souls and the Dwarves and everything on Go-Kart Records. Lou's tastes were downright exotic for a time when every male in my graduating class was bleaching their hair to look like Eminem.

Lou said he couldn't go to my birthday party because he was observing the anniversary of John Lennon's death, which I accepted as a perfectly reasonable excuse not to help me blow out the candles on my Simpsons birthday cake. I crashed my first car on the drive back from asking Lou to the prom. He had said "no," and that he just got ■ girlfriend. And I was trying to convince myself that the feeling of having my organs ripped out by a Mortal Combat character would eventually fade when I ran a red light in front of the movie theater in our town, ■ accident that is still reflected in my car insurance rates fourteen years later.

He invited me to his New Year's Eve party and then made out with his new girlfriend on an air hockey table in the basement in full view of everyone in attendance. Lou's new girlfriend loved the Spice Girls and had kind of a receding hairline. The sight of their wet tongues moving around outside of their bodies was like a National Geographic special I had seen on the banana slugs in Santa Cruz. I pretended I was sick and found a phone to call my mother to pick me up at 11:30 on New Year's Eve. I spent the last moments of the year 2000 crying in my room and kissing our family's beloved weinerdog at midnight.

I don't know why I still wanted to be friends with Lou. Likely, I was just hoping my teen love voodoo would strike his girlfriend dead, and then we could sloppily make out on an air hockey table in a dim, wood-paneled basement.

"Can you make a flyer for my band's show?" he asked, changing the disc from *Abbey Road* to *Figure 8*.

"Sure!" If there is one thing I am good at, it is taking the menial task of making a flyer for a shitty band and distorting it into an epic art installation showing tropes of unrequited, obsessive lust. I got home from school, dropped my backpack on the dining room floor, and commenced to make ■ ridiculously intricate cut-and-paste flyer for the very same person who asked if *my car* was okay when I told him I got into a massive accident.

The next day, I used my access to our school's photocopier to run off four hundred copies of the flyer, otherwise known as *The Sistine Chapel Ceiling of My Desperation*, and I was standing in the main hallway giving them out after school when I ran into Jenny.

"Why don't we start a band? The talent show is coming up," she said, looking at the hundreds of magazine letters carefully laid out on the xeroxed page like a ransom note in a Liam Neeson movie.

"I dunno. I don't play anything." I had saved up to buy an electric guitar for my sixteenth birthday to impress a different boy, but when I couldn't afford to take lessons it ended up functioning as an expensive holder of leis and light-up necklaces from weddings. Jenny had been trying to learn the entirety of *Master of Puppets* on guitar with her older brother, who, coincidentally, I also had a crush on. Usually, Jenny played flute in the school's marching band, the *Sachem Flaming Arrows*, a name that was not only completely insensitive to Native Americans, but also lent itself to countless homophobic slurs from opposing marching bands. Jenny was used to a constant open-season of humiliation, so public performance was no big deal to her.

"You can sing. I'll play guitar," she said. I barely spoke in school, and the idea of singing in front of an assembly of my classmates during a talent show was terrifying, but it was also all of my rock and roll fantasies coming true at once.

"That leaves drums and bass," I said. At that moment, our other friend Diana walked by. Diana could usually be found at home wrapped in a blanket, watching a six-hour VHS set of the BBC's production of *Pride & Prejudice*. She read a lot of Anne Rice and played cello in the school orchestra. "Hey Diana, want to be in a band with me and Jenny?"

She slowed down, hurling her heavy honors student backpack to the ground with a relieved sigh. "Oh, cool! As what?"

"Bassist?" Jenny asked.

"Okay. But is there indeed ■ bass at our disposal?" Diana asked, using the language of someone who rarely interacted outside of reading nineteenth century women's literature.

"We can borrow my brother's," Jenny said. "I'm sure Matt wouldn't mind."

Later that night we met at my house to bake cupcakes and figure out what our name was going to be. I proposed *Soiled Linen* after a sign I saw on hospital laundry bins when my sister was having her appendix taken out. Jenny suggested *The Genetically Altered Squirrels*, a name so good we didn't even need to put it to vote. "We can call our first album *Radioactive Nuts*," she said. "You can't go wrong with that."

I gently laid my guitar in the backseat of the crushed Buick Regal, ignoring the slow drip of antifreeze and small plume of smoke from the radiator, and together we drove to our first practice. Jenny and I shoved aside a weightlifting bench and garbage bags of molding stuffed animals to make room in the basement for the drum set and bass. There was no microphone, so I just screamed ■ loudly as I could for the first time in my life as a shy weirdo with a crush on every slightly alternative male who looked at me. The song we planned on taking us to high school talent victory was written on receipt paper at my job as a grocery store cashier. Jenny was the only one of us who was actually familiar with her assigned instrument, so she figured out a musical arrangement. This song was called, "I Wanna Be Mr. T," and it only utilized one part of the drum set: the high hat. How could we lose?

We had one other practice a month later. It was the day before the talent show tryouts and we were forced to make a lineup change when Diana had to choose between the band and our drama club's production of *Pippin*. The day of the tryouts, Jenny and I waited in the audience for our bassist and drummer to arrive. I bit my nails and watched the other acts before us. There were a lot of girls singing a capella, a dance troupe that performed a too-sexy routine to Montell Jordan's "This Is How We Do It," a baton twirler, and a few bands. The



STEVE THUESON

No one gets cut from a high school talent show, right? There has to be some sort of self-esteem clause that prevents them from hurting people's feelings.

boys in my leadership class who wore pukka shell necklaces had a Dave Matthews rip-off band. The guys who wore trench coats had a sludgy industrial band called Mind Detergent. Lou Federbaum performed ■■ acoustic set. He walked confidently to a stool he had a friend plant center stage, tweaked the knobs on the headstock of his guitar, and played a painfully slow version of Elliott Smith's "Miss Misery." Something about his level of self-seriousness that day finally dissolved my feelings for him.

When the rest of our band arrived, we set up our instruments. This was the first time in my life I was using an actual microphone, and where I thought I would automatically drop to my knees and move with a James Brown level of self-assuredness, I was more or less frozen. I sang stiffly where I stood, studying the reactions of the audience and judges. They watched our performance for only about eight seconds of a one-minute punk song. We finished and brought our equipment back to the damaged Buick.

"Nobody can ever say I'm not outgoing again," I said, wiping beads of sweat from my forehead with my shaking hand.

Jenny lifted the bass drum into the backseat. "No one gets cut from a high school talent show, right?"

I thought about it. "There has to be some sort of self-esteem clause that prevents them from hurting people's feelings."

"Then why would they call it a talent show?"

None of us had an answer.

**

When the list was put on display at the end of the week, Jenny and I were the first two waiting while a secretary taped it to the glass case containing sports trophies from the years 1970-'79. We read and reread the list twice.

"This is bullshit," I said.

"How can it be legal to hurt teenagers' feelings on purpose? I'm still ■ minor!"

I squinted at the list in disbelief and then I saw ■ name I recognized: Lou Federbaum.

There was just no justice.

"This is bullshit," I repeated.

The Genetically Altered Squirrels practiced one other time: in preparation for my high school graduation party. Lou

Federbaum had promised that he would bring over his band's P.A. if I made him more flyers. The day of the party, I ran an extension cord to the patio and brought over all of Jenny's brother's gear, but Lou never showed. When I called, his mother answered and I heard muffled talking. She said he was sick, but I knew he was probably tonguing his bald girlfriend in the rec room. Jenny and I put the drums and guitars back in the hot car, disappointed that we could not play the cover of "Enter Sandman" we had added to our repertoire for my extended family.

But then we jumped in the pool and beat each other with noodles until mosquitoes came out and it got dark and the CD started to skip. By then, I had stopped repeating the unhealthy mantra of, "I can't believe we didn't make the high school talent show." Once the shock wore off, I finally came to see how ridiculous it was ■ jury of our educators had decided that we were so untalented that we weren't worthy of the chance to try harder.

—Cassie J. Sneider

AMERICAN GRILLED CHEESE REVIEW

REV. NØRB

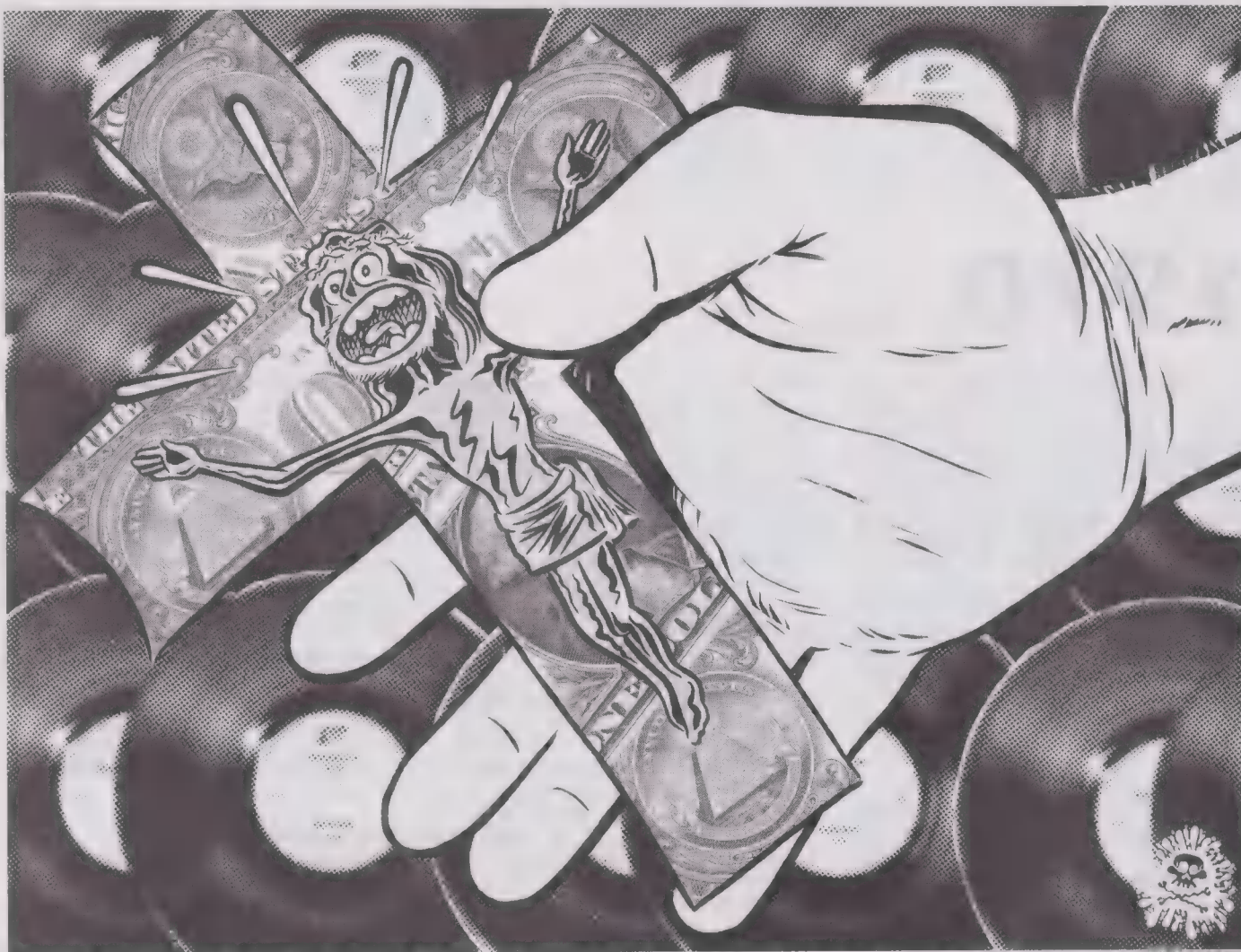
**"A 45 is twelve
louder than
a 33. That's a
damn fact."**

MY BIG TWELVE-INCH

A friend of mine has a thirteen-year-old son who texts me about twenty questions a day about punk rock, because i am, apparently, the way, the truth, and the light. Or maybe he's just bored, i dunno. *Do you like the Misfits? Do you like the Dead Kennedys? Did you ever meet the Misfits? Did you ever meet the Dead Kennedys? Do you like the Ramones? Have you ever met the Ramones? What were the Ramones like? Did I ever ask you if you met the Misfits?* I field about as many questions as i can stand ((noblesse oblige and all like that)), hoping to be repaid in the next life. Yesterday, he asked me what my favorite Dead Kennedys record was, to which i responded *In God We Trust, Inc.* He told me he'd never heard of that one. I was flabbergasted—not so much that a thirteen-year-old wasn't familiar with *In God We Trust, Inc.* ((i mean, kids today, ya know???)), but that a thirteen-year-old who cared enough about the Dead Kennedys to ask someone almost quadruple his age what his favorite Dead Kennedys record was wasn't familiar with it. Like, how exactly did you manage to gloss over the band's best record, Grasshopper? After ruminating upon the situation for a while, i speculated that, in the CD era ((or whatever era this is)), *In God We Trust, Inc.*—by virtue of being an eight-song 12", and not an album proper—was likely absorbed into bonus tracks for the following album, *Plastic Surgery Disasters*. A bit of internet research quickly confirmed this was the case, which, of course, led me into giving him a long-winded tangential history lecture about how the cover art for *PSD* was basically ripped off from the cover art from the *Off of the Leash 7"* by Society Dog, sending him various links and images to corroborate my claim, et cetera, et cetera. He responded to this by asking me if i'd ever met the Sex Pistols ((ya know what else is weird? "Police Truck" is no longer on *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*. Nutty. Now get off my lawn, and pull up your pants)). This, then, caused me to deeply ponder the age-old ((okay, minutes-old)) question of what, exactly, the fate of 12" EP releases will become, as a whole, as mankind slides ever further into the vanishing point of the future. How will these records be remembered in our collective consciousnesses? Are they fated to just be rolled up and consumed, Katamari-like, by their nearest full-length neighbor? Are the *In God We Trust, Inc.* 's of the world just a bunch of little rubber cement blobs that larger,

infinitely more gluttonous rubber cement blobs like *Plastic Surgery Disasters* roll over and absorb??? CAN THE VALIANT AND MISUNDERSTOOD 12" EP FORMAT STAND FIRM AGAINST THE PERNICIOUS ASS-PUMMELING OF TIME??? And what about Naomi? I realize this is heavy shit, man. I mean, obviously we can't move forward as a species or thriving subculture thereof until we get some kind of handle on what's to become of our 12" EPs going forward ((further, the topic of 12" records which spin at 45 rpm has suddenly become interesting to me: I've been on about thirty or forty records in my life, over the course of the last thirty years, and, up until this year, i'd never been on a 12" 45, ever. This year, i wound up on two of them. When Beer City Records® re-issued my first band's album earlier this year [*The Opera Ain't Over Til the Fat Lady Sings* by Suburban Mutilation, thank you very much]), they pressed up the reissue at 45 rpm, even though it originally spun at 33 [[the reason for doing so is that a 45 rpm record sounds better than a 33 rpm record, on account of more jagged little chunks of vinyl can be banging into one's stylus per second, for your intensified stimulation. A 45 is twelve louder than a 33. That's a damn fact]]. In point of fact, not only did the record originally spin at 33 rpm, but the back cover very helpfully stated "for best results, play at 33 rpm." And, in super-ultra-extra point of fact, that's what the back cover still states, to this day, even though the record now spins at 45. Well, don't believe everything you read. In addition to this, my current band, Rev. Nørb & the Onions, released our twelve-song debut album at 45 rpm, using the same volume-based rationale. So, although these records are both twelve-inch platters that spin at 45 rpm, i consider neither of them to be a 12" EP, if you're scoring at home)). And what exactly do we mean by the term "12" EP" anyway? The *Razorcake* style conventions document, to which all contributors slavishly adhere, defines a 12" EP as "under ten songs" and a 12" LP, which must never be referred to as such ("LP" must stand alone, like the Nature Boy)) as containing ten songs or more. The conventions add that "A newer option is MLP (for mini-LP) which are usually eight or nine songs and feel more like a full-length than an EP." This set of definitions, taken at face value, provide an interesting set of problems: Since running time is not taken into account

in the definition of EP-ness, only the number of tracks contained, it follows that records like Black Flag's *My War* and *Slip It In*—as well as *Marquee Moon*, *Raw Power*, and *White Light/White Heat*—are, by definition, EPs, not LPs. LOGICAL FALLACY! SYSTEMIC BREAKDOWN!! TRANS-SIBERIAN PANDEMIC!!! I declare this definition faulty and unreliable! Our definition of "mini-LP" seems more workable, but it too is not without its own fraught-with-perilness! After all, *Beware the Misfits*, which certainly seems like a mini-album to me, has but seven songs! That would seem to bump it down to the status of a mere 12" EP, which is nebulous enough of a term that it could refer to, say, the Ramones *Real Cool Time 12"*, which only has one song on the A side and two songs on the B side, and can hardly be imagined to be in the same taxonomical class as *Beware* ((enterprising young whippersnappers among you might be wondering WHY THE ACTUAL FUCK bands/labels would bother putting out a twelve-inch record with only three goddamn songs on it in the first place. This is a fair question. This rather dopey practice seemed to blossom in the pre-digital days of the 1980s, when college radio was still kind of a thing. As Bill Stevenson of All explained to me at the time, releasing a 7" was a total waste of time from a college radio airplay standpoint: The DJs were lazy bastards who couldn't be bothered to sift through a pile of seven-inch vinyl. They would, however, flip through a stack of twelve-inch records, or cock their head sideways and read the spines, so you had to put out 12" singles if you wanted them to notice you [[this explains a lot of the screwy 12" singles they put out, like the "Just Perfect" b/w "Wishing Well" thing with the bulldozer dumping the dirt all over them, et al. DJs were also too busy getting stoned in the record library to be bothered to cue up any song that wasn't at the very beginning of a 12" side, so expecting them to play, say, song number four on your new album was as Quixotic a windmill tilt as expecting them to play your 7" was]])). I mean, *Beware* is almost certainly the best Misfits record ever, and i live in mortal fear that one day i'll wake up and it'll be nothing more than the bonus tracks on *Earth A.D.* or something! The fact of the matter is that some sort of weird 12" 45 / mini-LP / 12"-that-spins-at-33-but-only-has-like-eight-songs-on-it thing is, with alarming frequency,



THE ANNALS OF PUNK ROCK HISTORY ARE CLOGGED WITH THESE WEIRD FUCKING RECORDS THAT WE CAN BARELY DEFINE AND CONFUSE US ALL GREATLY!!!

the BEST RECORD MANY PUNK BANDS RELEASE IN THEIR LIFETIME. We were speaking of All—what's their best record? The *Allroy for Prez* six-song 12" EP! What's the best Replacements record? *Stink*, an eight-song 12" 45! Black Flag's *Jealous Again* five-song 12" 45 is only their second best record, but i think most of us put Keith Morris in his own special cage anyway. TSOL's five-or-six-song ((give or take a backlash)) 12" 45 is clearly the best thing they ever recorded, and you can debate the comparative merits of Red Cross's first six-song 12" 45, but you can't really argue that it's their punkest ((and perhaps only punk?)) record ever. Hüsker Dü's best record is not ■ 12" 45, but they add an entirely new level of intrigue to the proceedings by having their twelve-song, nineteen-minute *Everything Falls Apart* album pressed at 45 rpm, and their next major release, *Metal Circus*, be ■ seven-song 12" 45 that's only a minute shorter than its predecessor! The best Dickies record is *Stukas Over Disneyland*, an eight-

song 12" that spins at 33 and is almost certainly the poster child for the term "mini-LP" ((of course, the Dickies were the same folks who gave us the self-identified "white vinyl maxi single" which was a ten-inch record and therefore beneath our contempt for now)). DOA's eight-song *War on 45* is probably only their third-best record, but i still consider it to be their "third album," conceding it a level of respect i do not afford the four-song *Triumph of the Ignoroids*, a record of the same diameter and velocity. Minor Threat's *Out of Step* 12" is not quite an album, but, then again, it's their worst record, so who gives ■ fuck? The four-song *Fighting Boys* 12" by Battalion Of Saints is surely their best work. A case could be made that the six-song *Inside My Brain* 12" is the Angry Samoans' finest work, and *Living in Darkness*, the closest thing to a good album Agent Orange ever produced, is ■ scant eight songs long. THE ANNALS OF PUNK ROCK HISTORY ARE CLOGGED WITH THESE WEIRD FUCKING RECORDS

THAT WE CAN BARELY DEFINE AND CONFUSE US ALL GREATLY!!! What becomes of them as the formats march steadily onward into unrecognizability? Do they just get absorbed into other, larger works, like *In God We Trust, Inc.* did? Do they absorb smaller works, and elevate themselves to full album status? I don't know anyone who doesn't consider *Stink* the second Replacements album, yet I know no one who considers *Jealous Again* the first Black Flag album. What separates a mini-LP from ■ maxi-single? The number of songs? The running length? The turntable speed? Some elusive, indefinable, spiritual whatzit? What about *Into the Unknown* by Bad Religion, and why do all these formats sound like feminine hygiene products anyway? Actually, I think my last two questions just answered each other. Now, please excuse me. A thirteen-year-old kid wants to know if i've ever met Rancid.

Love
—Norb

I'M AGAINST IT

DESIGNATED DATE

"There were some hugely influential albums that came out the same year I was squirted out unto this world."

1970

Happy Belated New Year. The fine publication perched between your fingers has been going strong nearly fourteen years straight without missing a single issue. That's something to be said, especially in these economically dry-humped times. This past January 4 also marked my forty-fifth year on this rock we call earth, too, so go ahead and yuk it up, shitkids—*everyone's* time starts hauling ass in the blink of an eye once you hit thirty. That noted, it dawned on me that there were some hugely influential albums that came out the same year I was squirted out unto this world. These four albums are of some of the greatest releases that joined me on my release back in 1970.

MC5

Back in the USA, released Jan. 15, 1970

While this isn't their first face-walloping album that was recorded live (yes, a live debut), the studio-recorded *Back* delivers the MC5's over-flowing, stripped-down rock'n'roll urgency in spades, and man, does this record runneth over. Bookended in between two covers (Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti" and Chuck Berry's "Back in the USA"), the tracks cut on this album laid a trail for a good number of soon-to-be pioneers wagoning out to become punk rock's first wave. Calling the government out on their horseshittery ("The American Ruse"), eyeing up the opposite sex ("Looking at You"), just trying to get some sex happening ("Teenage Lust"), making the scene ("Tonight"), or acting on your human DNA ("Call Me Animal")—it's all here and then some, pressed on the grooves of this full-length that's guaranteed to get the blood coursing through your veins and your body movin'. It must be noted that MC5 guitarists Fred "Sonic" Smith and Wayne Kramer kept the fiery guitar tension blazing on this album, the pummeling, slippery fluidity of Dennis "Machine Gun" Thompson on the kit locks it all down here.

The Damned did a bang-up job paying their respects to the band by laying down a frenzied version of "Looking at You" on their 1979 classic album, *Machine Gun Etiquette*. Also in 1979, the MC5's "High School" was included in the film soundtrack for the Roger Corman cult classic *Rock'n'Roll High School*, but didn't make the cut onto the actual soundtrack that was available for sale in stores. The Didjits recorded a faithful version of "Call Me Animal" for their 1990

Hornet Piñata full length, and Swedish garage rock and rollers supreme, The Hellacopters, recorded a heavy-duty version of one of my fave MC5 tunes, "The American Ruse," back in 2000 on a split they did with Gluecifer entitled *Respect the Rock America*. Respect the rock indeed, as Detroit's MC5 did throughout their entire short-lived career. Much love to departed brothers Rob Tynner, Fred "Sonic" Smith, and Michael Davis.

BLACK SABBATH

Black Sabbath, released Feb. 13, 1970

Yep, Black Sabbath. Love 'em or hate 'em, there's not a single person in the world who can deny what this band did to (and for) rock music during that specific time. I honestly think a lot of people at that time looked at this debut record from one of England's best bands to be as scary—and not only scary because of the overall tone the band was sharing with the music world—but because a good number of people simply didn't know what to make of them. Remember, this band started playing at a time when the genre heavy metal, *real* heavy metal, was completely unknown because it didn't even exist.

This debut record is arguably the catalyst that set the bar and put heavy metal in motion, but that's for a whole other column. And before you start pissing and moaning about that, shut it. You'd be surprised how many die-hard Sabbath fans there are amongst the early and current punk rock artists people hold so dear. This debut, while not my personal fave full-length of theirs during the Ozzy era, has continued to elbow its way to the front of the crowd, a crowd that has followed suit over the last four decades.

What I've loved about this band, besides the songs being so damned heavy, is that their material from the early years sounds like it could have been recorded yesterday. It's still got the hooks that grab you by the face; it's still relevant. The other thing I've come to learn over the years about the early years of Black Sabbath is that they are a band's band. No matter the different genres of all the punk bands I've played with over the years, there were/are at least a few members (if not all) in those bands who understand that (quoting Father Merrin) "the power of Sabbath compels you!"

Four guys from Birmingham, churned out an entirely new hybrid of rock'n'roll for

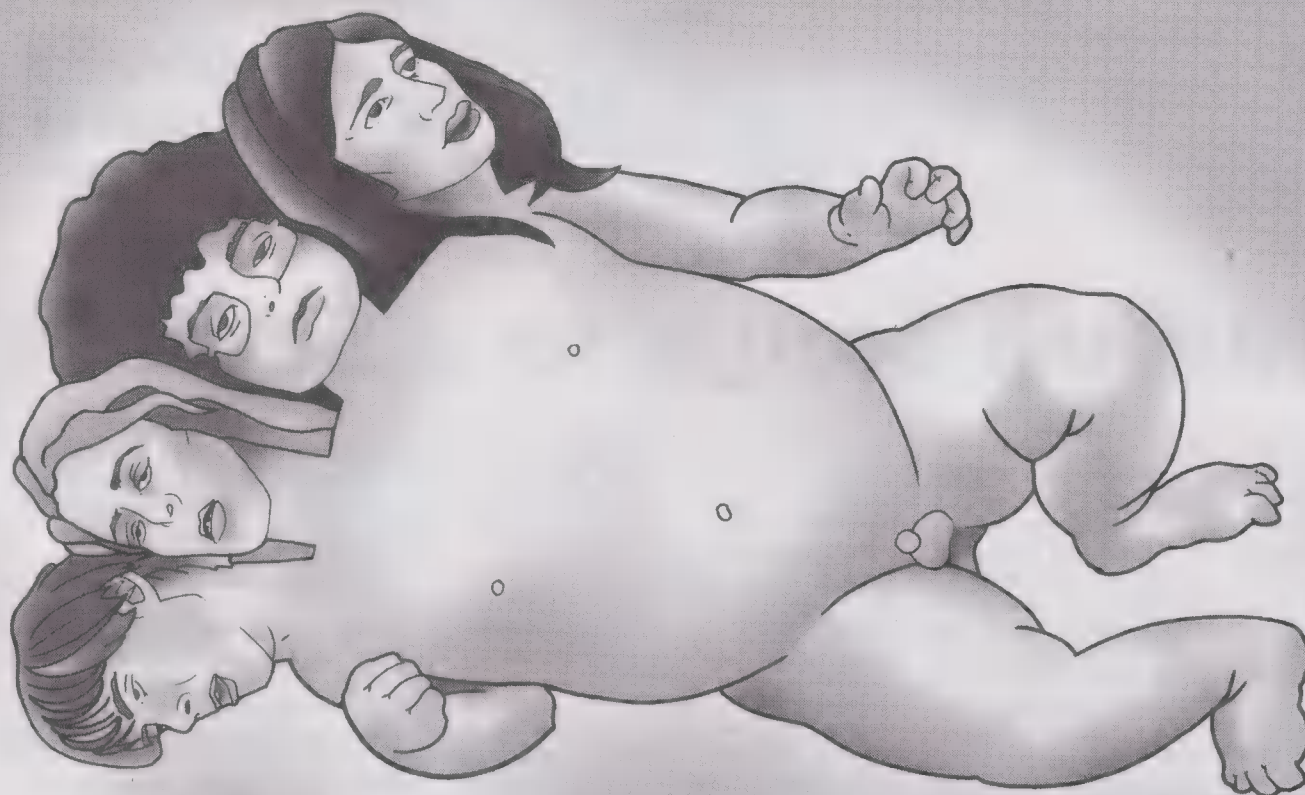
their debut record in roughly twelve hours. All of the takes were recorded live, with a few minimal guitar and vocal overdubs. Twelve hours recording, then another day to mix the whole album down. Two days, completely done. That's five days less than what it took the Ramones to just record their debut album (and even a week in the '70s was unheard of). Black Sabbath accomplishing this is punk as fuck, if you ask me, especially with the results of what they nailed down in the studio. Don't believe me? Listen to this record, especially the tracks "N.I.B.," "The Wizard," "Wicked World," or the foreboding opening track, "Black Sabbath." I know without a doubt that if CJ Ramone is reading this, he is whole-heartedly saying "FUCK, yeah!" out loud this very moment. Cheers, CJ.

THE STOOGES

Fun House, released July 7, 1970

Considered by many at the time to be the identifying studio moment of The Stooges' career, *Fun House* continues to be the album to influence many an outsider/outside artist to pick up an instrument and start a band. Like their Detroit, Mich. brothers in the MC5 across the way, Ann Arbor's Stooges were biting at the chance to blow minds with their tainted rock-and-rollified version of the blues, one madman and guitar-screaming show at a time.

While their 1969 debut *The Stooges* was no slouch by any means, this second studio full-length guaranteed the band a much-deserved future spot in the proto-punk Hall of Fame with its rolling bass, pulsating drum beats, and lashing guitar work. Even if you've never heard this record before and pay little attention to Iggy Pop's lyrics or his howling, the music itself sets an urban tone of desperation—something that was very well going on in America during this time—with the Vietnam War, unemployment, and the ongoing racial tensions throughout most of the country. Instead of the usual hippified flower power attitude a lot of bands were expressing at this time towards these topics of desperation, The Stooges embraced that desperation, added a heavy dose of isolation with substance abuse, and fed it through the wall of sound that they ended up nurturing into live gigs and top-notch albums like *Fun House*. The entire album is a sobering reality check that the world isn't all right,



JACKIE RUSTED

The songs make the utmost sense when listened to by those who are just as alienated.

and that's the whole point: that the songs make the utmost sense when listened to by those who are just as alienated and/or fucked up. This record doesn't simply kill, it kills on many levels.

A whole new breed of bands a few years later heavily identified with this approach to rock'n'roll, including four guys from Forest Hills, Queens in New York who would end up being the original lineup of the Ramones. Tommy Ramone vividly remembered meeting Dee Dee Ramone for the first time through their being mutual fans of The Stooges, repeatedly listening to a bootlegged cassette of a live concert while they sat around their neighborhood and drank with the other two guys. Johnny Ramone always referred to The Stooges as "sick music," meaning they were great in a terribly warped and dark way. Joey Ramone cited on numerous occasions that the first three Stooges records were some of his biggest influences.

Fun House was recorded in about two weeks, and supposedly when they went in to run through the songs for the first day, they weren't having the way it sounded. So they stripped down the traditional isolated setup completely and set up in one room exactly as they would when playing live, even with Iggy singing through a handheld mic.

Fourteen days later, the band had all the takes they needed (all of which can be had in a box set celebrating the entire sessions of *Fun House*, and is well worth getting your hands on). Although three-quarters of the original lineup have passed on (Dave Alexander, Ron Asheton, and Scott Asheton), Iggy Pop has been holding the torch with his solo career, as well as different versions of The Stooges off and on over the years. This record, however, still holds its own from the day it was released some forty-five years ago.

DAVID BOWIE

The Man Who Sold the World, released Nov. 4, 1970

A lot of Bowie fans and music fans alike consider this album to be the starting point for the glam era in rock'n'roll, not only because this album of Bowie's leans harder on the electric guitar than his first two full-lengths, but because it marks the beginning of the David Bowie/Mick Ronson team, the same team that would go on to give us the epic *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* album that kicked a huge bottle of glitter rock all over the planet just two years later.

David Bowie wrote the hell out of a lot of songs, but any self-respecting Bowie fan or

diehard will tell you that Ronson's era with Bowie proved to produce some of the most beloved and endeared albums in his career, and that's coming from yours truly who loves the shit out of *Diamond Dogs*. The great thing about *The Man* is that you can actually hear Bowie and Ronson starting to get their rock ducks in a row with songs like "Black Country Rock," that, by the way, Big Drill Car did a rollicking version of on a seven-inch many moons ago. Other cuts from this album that take a future peek of the glam floodgates being slammed open are "She Shook Me Cold," "The Width of a Circle," and "The Supermen." Fans of Nirvana will instantly recognize the original version of the record's title track that Kurt Cobain took and made a hit with, even though the original recording remains the better of the two, simply from Bowie's singing alone. Sorry, Kurt, you may be dead, but even I ain't giving you this one. And speaking of the departed, Mick Ronson unfortunately passed on back in 1993 battling liver cancer, ending any rumors that he and Bowie would ever share a stage again.

—Designated Dale

designateddale@yahoo.com



THE DINGHOLE REPORTS

RHYTHM CHICKEN

**"A children's
ball cage of
punk rock!"**

Adding Songs to a Setlist

It started like any other November day for me here in northern Door County, Wisconsin. My alarm went off at 6:20AM. I, of course, pressed the snooze button three or four times before I dragged my forty-three-year-old corpse out of bed, down the stairs, and into yet another day of soup shop labors. It was the day before Thanksgiving, my last day open before the crazy shopping-frenzy weekend of chaos. I took my ceremonial first dump of the day, cleaned up, and dressed for the workday. I chose my purple Amoeba Records shirt from Berkeley. I got the shirt free for spending enough during my one visit in 1996. I scored some rare Devo vinyl and a Six-Finger Satellite promo from Sub Pop. I like that shirt.

Once downstairs in the shop, I looked outside and noticed the snow, checked the temperature, and looked at the forecast for the day. I ran out to the outside-access back room with the circuit board and flicked some switches to maintain a low-heat setup for the day. Back inside, I started heating up the soups which, in turn, helped warm the shop. I tuned into the local Wisconsin Public Radio station to hear the most recent news and whatever inane subject was occupying their talk show for the day. They were talking about different Thanksgiving recipes so I turned to the CD player. I had the CD *You by Government Issue* cued up. I love this album. It was one of my favorites in high school. I'll never forget seeing them at Kutska's Hall just outside of Green Bay.

I finished all my prepping duties and got the shop up and running on time. Soon a few regulars stopped in and the business day was underway. I served a substantial amount of soup while preparing soup for the day after Thanksgiving. I was kept busy enough, but still found time to sit and call my friend Timebomb Tom down in Green Bay. He runs the record store there and is my old boss. I knew winter was here for good and I would need a CD of my favorite Christmas album to get me through the next month. Tom said he would have it for me at the rock show that evening. I was excited to get out of the shop, out of the county, and into the rock show scene I've been all too absent from for the last seven months. The workday ended and I was soon on the road.

I got all my supplies loaded into the Rooster Roller and ran across town to pick up my Hen. For the two-hour drive down

to Green Bay I played a CD of the Moving Targets—*Brave Noise* and *Burning in Water*—their first two albums. *Burning in Water* was another favorite album of mine in high school. I remember walking around Green Bay many summer nights with a yo-yo and my walkman blaring this album into my headphones. The drumming was intense and amazing. Every song on this album totally blew me away. Even today, the production and songwriting on this album just leave me in awe. It's one of those bands from long ago which I think of as my pearl, unspoiled by mass attention. I can enjoy it today, twenty-five years later, and still feel like it's mine, all mine. The snow fell again and the roads became dangerous.

Once in Green Bay, we made a beeline for the new Jake's Pizza. The old Jake's Pizza was a pinnacle of pizza excellence for the entire Titledown area. The new Jake's is quickly reclaiming the crown! The old Jake's was right across the street from the Concert Cafe, the rock venue which hosted most of Green Bay's great shows from the nineties. The new Jake's is across the street from that evening's show at the Crunchy Frog. The evening's line-up included Kepi Ghoulie, the Mean Jeans, the Jetty Boys, and Beach Patrol. With a line-up like this, a belly full of Jake's pizza was near essential. Kepi, a faithful patron of the old Jake's Pizza, was ecstatic to learn of the new Jake's. My Hen and I were joined by the Bearded Shane for pizza and PBRs. Some things in Green Bay just refuse to die, and Jake's is one such thing. Their pizza is just timeless, eternal. It is the Green Bay Packers of pizza.

We carried some pizzas across the street for the bands and were welcomed with open mouths! Kepi introduced me to the Mean Jeans and then they all went face-first into the pizzas. Beach Patrol opened the show and wooed the audience with their Tom Petty meets Elvis Costello blend of rock'n'roll, always a crowd pleaser! Next up were the Jetty Boys from nearby Sheboygan. Having not seen them since Insubordination Fest '09 in Baltimore, it was a joy to see them back in our own neck of the woods. Drew and company brought the power pop punk at high volume and had me gulping PBR just trying to keep up. They finished their set and I locked eyes with my Hen and the Bearded Shane, my road crew. It was time.

Dinghole Report #125: Thanksgiving-Eve Ruckus with Kepi and Company! (Rhythm Chicken sighting #692)

I walked outside of the Crunchy Frog with my Hen and the Bearded Shane. It was snowing again as we shuffled out to my car full of crappy drums. As we hauled the drums into the venue a few heads turned and scurried behind us. I led us to the center of the band room and started setting up shop right in the middle of the crowd. A few confused concert-goers were irate as my new stage pushed them aside, re-arranging the dynamics of the stage and audience perspectives. I pulled on the Chickenhead and rocked the Chickenrock! The crowd gathered around, yet somehow knew enough to keep a safe distance. I pounded out the time-tested chicken beats and milked the crowd for cheers and jeers! Just as fast as I dished it out, they ate it up! The room was simply electric with ad-hoc lunacy!

After a few rounds of chaotic drumbeats and responding cheers, I tossed my little drumsticks to the crowd. I could hear the "oohs" and "aahs" as I rose up my glorious ruckus logs, the largest drumsticks known to man! I pounded out some ridiculous Godzilla rhythms as my drums crumbled under pressure. My mannequin head fell off the bass drum (a sure sign of rock'n'roll meltdown) and the ruckus became terminal! Like a fish out of water, I flailed around in a pile of drum debris! I twitched and jerked 'til the forces of ruckus subsided, leaving me on the floor gasping for beer. My nerves guided me to arise and hippity-hop back up to the bar.

Next up was Kepi. He had the Mean Jeans backing him as he ripped through a set of all Groovie Ghoulies' classic hits. As always, Kepi is simply the nonstop king of high-energy fun! He and the Mean Jeans rocked the Crunchy Frog through a crazy set of pop punk hits of the '90s, all Groovie Ghoulies originals, and the entire crowd sang and hopped along to the chaotic fun! Soon the room was filled with balloons and it was like a children's ball cage of punk rock! Towards the end of Kepi's set, I noticed Timebomb Tom standing directly in front of the band. He bent down and took a Sharpie to the setlist directly in front of Kepi. He started ADDING SONGS TO THE LIST! Never in my years



KASIA ONISZCZUK

Like a fish out of water, I flailed around in a pile of drum debris!

of rock shows have I EVER seen someone add their requests ONTO THE BAND'S SETLIST! It was a ballsy move, I must say! Kepi explained that the Mean Jeans knew only so many of the Ghoulies' songs, so they kept Tom happy with ■ Ramones cover. The room erupted. One drunk and over-celebratory bearded gentleman fell face-first onto the stage and appeared to be knocked out! His buddies pulled him back to life and thrust a beer into his palm, the ol' Wisconsin smelling salt! ROCK'N'ROLL.

My roadies helped me haul the remains of my chickenkit out to the Rooster Roller, through the increasing snow accumulation outside. My Hen and I quickly headed straight to the merch table to help out the punk rock cause. I got a Jetty Boys' CD, some Kepi art trading cards, and ■ Mean Jeans coozie. Black Friday can suck my beak. I sat and clucked with Kepi a little until the Mean Jeans started their set of rock'em sock'em rock rock rock. They sounded GREAT, like super amped-up

fun ruckus-rock! The sad part was that my Hen and I had to depart. After only three songs, we bade Kepi farewell. Timebomb Tom handed me my requested CD, and we headed out to the car.

Once in the car, I put the CD into my car stereo. It was the Vince Guaraldi Trio's "Charlie Brown Christmas" album. I'm not really one for Christmas music, but this album has always won me over. It's the best background music for working with a hangover, and it also works for stressful drives through treacherous, snowy conditions. I filled up my coffee mug at the gas station and headed north. Vince Guaraldi soothed my nerves as my car surfed over the snowy highway back up to Door County. After a night of blazing funner-than-fun punk rock, it was the perfect calming agent for what would otherwise be ■ white-knuckle trip. I dropped off my hen at four AM, and then back at my place I quickly built ■ small fire in the fireplace. I threw in the new CD

from Thelonious Monster, *California Clam Chowder*, and stared into the fire with a cool can of Hamms in my wing. I remember seeing Thelonious Monster play at Kutska's Hall as well, over twenty years ago. They still sound pretty good. Happy Thanksgiving.

Three hours later, I awoke to drive back south for my family's Thanksgiving gathering. Vince Guaraldi and the Jetty Boys kept my car between the lines. The coffee kept my eyes from slamming shut. My mom's brandy-spiked apple cider kept the day within the realm of comfortability. The turkey and stuffing kept me full and warm. The gas station coffee and Vince Guaraldi helped me drive back up north through *another* snowfall. And back at my shop, I built another fire while listening to Slayer's *Reign in Blood*. The third track, "Necrophobic," clocks in at exactly 1:38. Huh, well whad'ya know.

—Rhythm Chicken



had a bit of a setback, but getting ahead of the curve now, at least in my wacky head... expect cool stuff as-of whenever I get to doing it.

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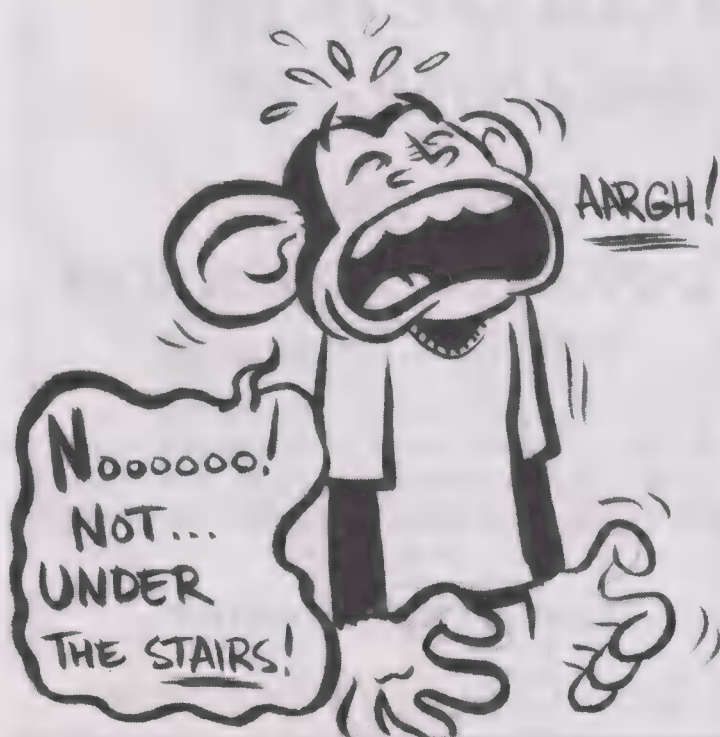
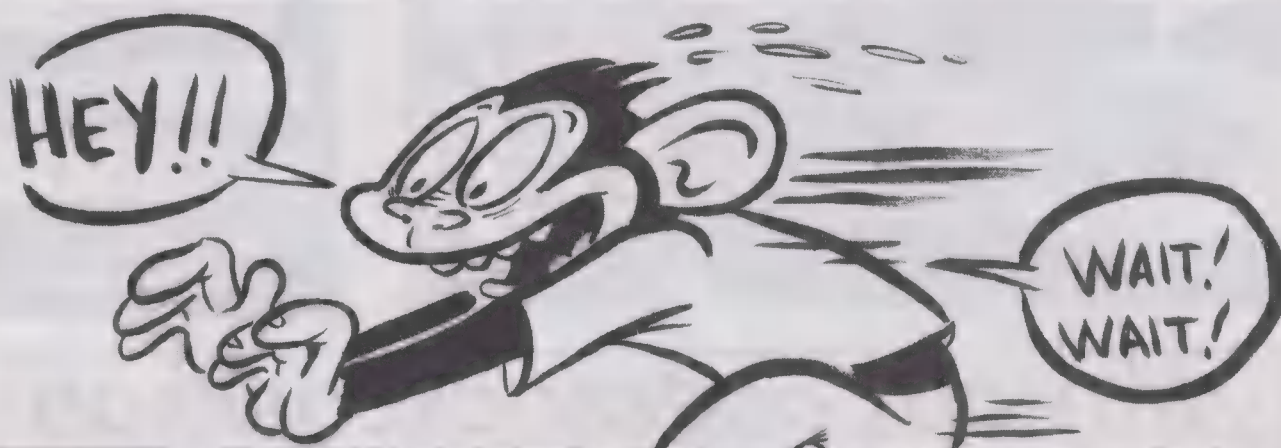
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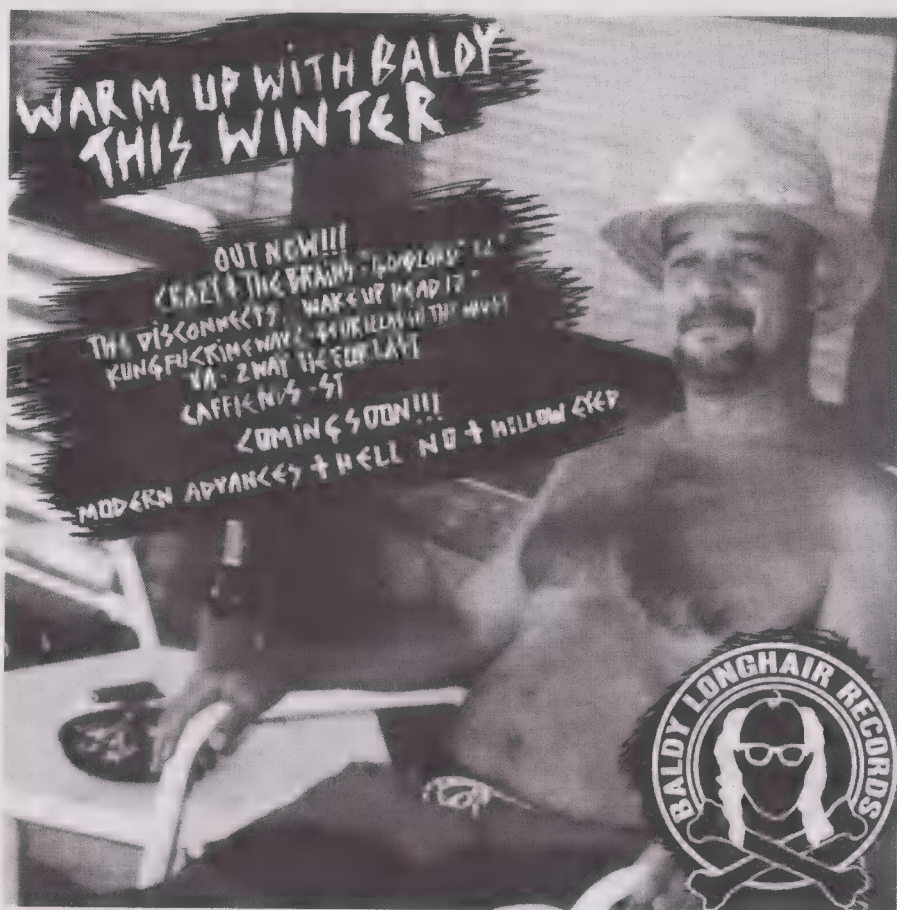
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FOR A SECOND!"

ART.

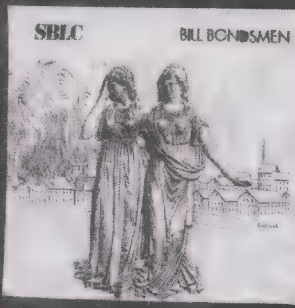


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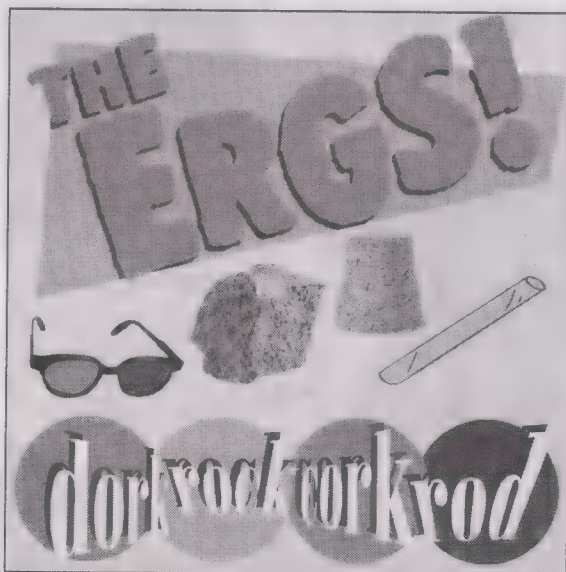
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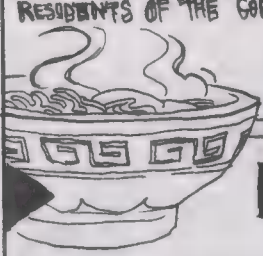


RECENTLY WE FOLLOWED THE NEWS STORY OF THE SHIRACHA HOT SAUCE FACTORY BEING UNDER PRESSURE TO RELOCATE OR CLOSE.

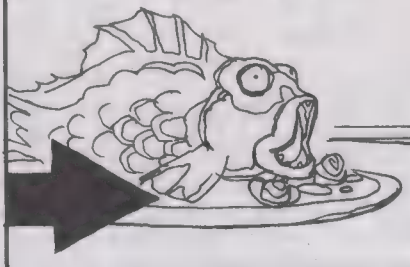
IRWINDALE
LA COUNTY



ALL DUE TO DAMNING ACCUSATIONS OF THEIR FACTORY FUMES CAUSING THROAT AND EYE BURNING AMONGST RESIDENTS OF THE COMMUNITY.




THE CITY CLAIMED THE FACTORY HAD A TEAR GAS EFFECT ON THE ENVIRONMENT.




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WHO ARE YOU?

"We find beauty in things that have been neglected."

Nardwuar vs. Wu-Tang Clan

Nardwuar: Who are you?

RZA: I'm me, yo. The Zig Zag Zane, born the Zig Zag Zig a law, the RZA, aka Bobby Steels, Bobby Digital, you know what I'm saying? RFD, know what I mean? The Scientist, the RZA-rector, the Abbott, you know what I mean? They say there is ninety-nine names of a law, right? I've got sixteen so far baby, I'm working on it.

Nardwuar: Wu-Tang Clan, live in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. And who is beside you? Can you introduce, who do we have in the room right now, RZA?

RZA: Well, we've got a lot of people in the room. Can I curse? Alright, cool. I like this. Okay first of all, come on.

Ghostface Killah: You know me. You know me. You know me.

Nardwuar: Who are you?

Ghostface: Tony Stark. Ghostface, baby. We in the building.

Nardwuar: And who else is in the room right now?

RZA: If you really want to get ninja, if you want to get ninja, if you go right here to the left corner over there, you got Raekwon the Chef.

Nardwuar: Hello, Raekwon the Chef!

Raekwon the Chef: Don't you believe it.

Nardwuar: RZA, Wu-Tang Clan, I have a gift for you here. A special poster. What can you tell the people about this poster right here? It's a movie you have sampled from, Shaolin versus... [Nardwuar hands *Shaolin vs Lama* poster]

RZA: Hold on, hold on. Oh *Shaolin vs the Lama*. Oh this is one of my favorite kung-fu flicks right here. We find beauty in things that have been neglected. Like, like Buddha said. He said, "A lotus, it grows on mud," but yet it's the symbol of their whole religion. So even in mud, beauty can grow. So we find things in the most unpredictable... that's why it's witty, unpredictable—it's talent here. But we will find something, and we will make something better out of it. Maybe only, maybe only fifteen thousand people in the whole world seen this movie, but now one million knows about it, you know what I'm saying?

Nardwuar: Now when you watched these movies years ago, you saw them in theaters. How dirty were the theaters, were they porno theaters?

RZA: No, they became pornos. They were so dirty, that they couldn't—they went down to porno theatres—you know what I'm saying? [laughter] Right?

Nardwuar: What about Channel 5, you could watch them on Channel 5, right?

RZA: Yeah, you know what I'm sayin'? This guy knows a lot, man. Hey Nard, you're starting, you know what I mean. [laughs] You're starting to surprise me, kid. [laughter] You know what I mean?

Nardwuar: RZA, I wanted to ask you, going way back, Prince Rakeem. What can you tell the people about Prince Rakeem? [Nardwuar hands RZA a Prince Rakeem LP]

RZA: Wah, wah, wah. Lemme... [laughs]

Nardwuar: Ghost, what can you tell the people about your Prince Rakeem LP?

Ghostface: Yo, you're genius, you're genius. That's my brother, yo.

RZA: Let me just talk about this. I can finally talk about this. I never got a chance to talk about this. This is back when, I think, MC Hammer and the Fresh Prince was, like the biggest, and Young MC were the biggest rappers, and so the labels were trying to make everybody be a certain way. So they decided to draw a character, thinking that it would be cool. It kind of looked more like a West Coast—what's my man, Humpty Hump and them. Yeah.

Nardwuar: The Digital Underground.

RZA: Yeah, The Digital Underground, that's my man. I like Shock G and them. But it's kind of, that seems more the inspiration, but if you look on the back of this thing, I want to show you all something, if you zoom in here on the back of the record, what it says there—"Wu-Tang Mix." I was already ready. They just wasn't ready. [Laughter] They wasn't ready, son.

Then we also had the DMD, yes another crew, Dick 'Em Down, "talk about the Dick 'Em Down, you come around, we dick 'em down." Ladies, they ain't getting away from us, you know what I mean? Back then, like I said, we was young, supporting our brothers, and we also wanted to be seen. So that is how it is. But now, I duck cameras, you know what I mean? They had to ask me fifteen times to do this interview with you.

Nardwuar: Thank you.

RZA: I got emails, texts all the way up to the last day like, "You're gonna do it, you're gonna do it?" I'm like, fuck it, I'm going to do it, you know what I mean?

Nardwuar: And also I had heard Raekwon—I heard that you believe that Wu-Tang Clan could have invented Facebook and Twitter, is that true?

Raekwon: Where do you get them slacks from, B?

Nardwuar: Tiger of London.

Raekwon: [Pointing to Nardwuar's pants] This snake got the illest fit on in the world, B.

RZA: Hey Nard, come back, come back, come back, come back, come back. Let me tell you something, let me tell you something. Wanna hear something? Ready, son? Music inspires, and over the years I've met doctors, screenwriters, scientists, I mean, even you know, you know, billionaires, you know, have told me Wu-Tang has inspired them to do certain things, you know? One guy told me that the internet itself, the modem, was invented listening to Wu-Tang.

Nardwuar: Now there's a guy out there that calls you the "Poon Tang Clan."

RZA: I don't know where you are coming from.

Nardwuar: And you have sampled him. In fact, he has a new album out. Blowfly calls you the "Poon Tang Clan." [Nardwuar shows RZA Blowfly record]

RZA: Well now Blowfly, there's a funny dude right there now.

Nardwuar: And you sampled him on "Uzi."

RZA: I sampled... listen. First of all, Blowfly has been around since we was kids, he's a dude like Richard Prior, he make dirty jokes. *Blowfly Zodiac*, that was my joint. We did sample him on one of the songs before. But no, Blowfly is a great musician. He also wrote songs like "Cleanup Woman" from Betty Wright, you know him. You know I know that.

Nardwuar: Clarence Reid.

RZA: Clarence. Blowfly is Clarence Reid, for those who don't know. Check it.

Nardwuar: "Cereal Killa" sampled "The Rub."

RZA: Exactly. The point I'm making though is, he said the "Poon Tang Clan." How come he always thinks about pussy?

Nardwuar: He calls you the "Poon Tang Clan," but he actually also said ODB was



EVAN WOLFF

One guy told me that the internet itself, the modem, was invented listening to Wu-Tang.

incredible because ODB sampled him for *Return to the 36 Chambers*.

RZA: Yeah, sampled him. He parodied him. What happened was, like I said, we used to listen to this dude's records and say his shit, then Dirty did a version of that, he was like [sings] "the first time ever you sucked my..." That was someone else. [laughter]

Nardwuar: What's cool though is Blowfly has said ODB sent him a check for six thousand dollars just because he loved him so much. Have you ever heard of stuff like that happening? Do you know if ODB actually did that?

RZA: Let me tell you something. You want to talk history? You know we sampled a song, there's a song called "Different Strokes," when the song plays, when it starts going off on a 45, like the last fade-out when you can hardly hear anything, I sampled that one part. I had to normalize it over and over on my sampler just to get that loop, aiyt? And that became one of the top hip hop songs in history, sampled by Syl Johnson. And you know what I did? Syl Johnson was not being respected at the time by the music industry and not, you know, getting what he was getting. And we sent him a check between sixty and one hundred thousand K, put him back on his feet. We told him we were going to use more of his music. I loved what he does. He was underrated in his time, and he

got back on his feet after some energy like that, you know what I mean?

And think about Sonny Carson, *The Education of Sonny Carson*, a movie you had never heard of until Ghostface used it on the *Ironman* album, you know what I mean? We went and built a studio for his family at the Brooklyn Restoration, where many kids was able to come and make music. You know, Wu-Tang always give back. We don't get out there and talk about it, actually I shouldn't be talking about it anyway. We're not talking about it for merit, but it's no surprise for Ol' Dirty to send six grand to Blowfly. Wu-Tang, we are giving back so much because we gained much, you know what I mean? At the same time, you got some people who don't even deserve nothing trying to come take from us, you know?

Ghostface: You ready? We gotta go, baby.

RZA: Yeah, that's it. That's it.

Nardwuar: And lastly, I have another poster, another gift here for you, Wu-Tang Clan, from Run Run Shaw's greatest movie from me, Nardwuar the Human Serviette, to you. His greatest movie that he ever produced.

RZA: This is his greatest movie you got?

Nardwuar: Run Run Shaw?

RZA: Run Run Shaw, his greatest movie was *Eight Diagram Pole Fighter*. [Nardwuar hands RZA a *Dirty Ho* movie poster]

Nardwuar: This is his greatest movie, from me to you, a gift. The name of the movie?

RZA: *Dirty Ho* right here. *Dirty Ho*. Yeah.

Nardwuar: What can you tell the people about *Dirty Ho*? I was curious.

RZA: Well first of all, *Dirty Ho*, classic movie, got Gordon Liu, you know what I mean, Wong Yue. It's very, very, directed by Lau Kar-leung. And we also had a homie that was down with us named Dirty Ho who hanged with ODB. ODB loved that movie, *Dirty Ho*, he gave that name, Dirty Ho to his man.

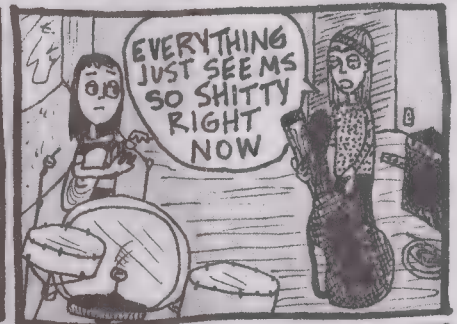
Nardwuar: Well thanks so much Wu-Tang Clan, really appreciate your time. Anything else you want to add to the people out there at all?

RZA: Man! [laughs] Yo, thank you. Oh yeah, anyway, my name is RZA, you're with the Wu-Tang Clan. Also you can check us out... just check us out, man.

Nardwuar: Well thanks very much Wu-Tang Clan, keep on rocking in the free world, and Doot doola doot doo...

RZA: Doot doo!

To see and hear the full, unedited interview please hop to nardwuar.com



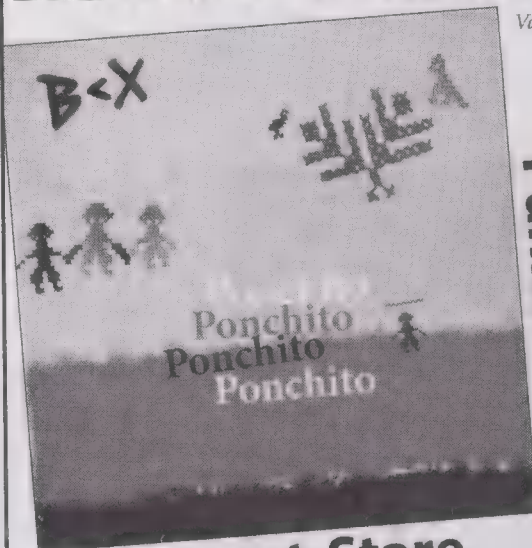


Dan Monick's Photo Page

Jeff Electric and Bud, Los Angeles 10/11/14

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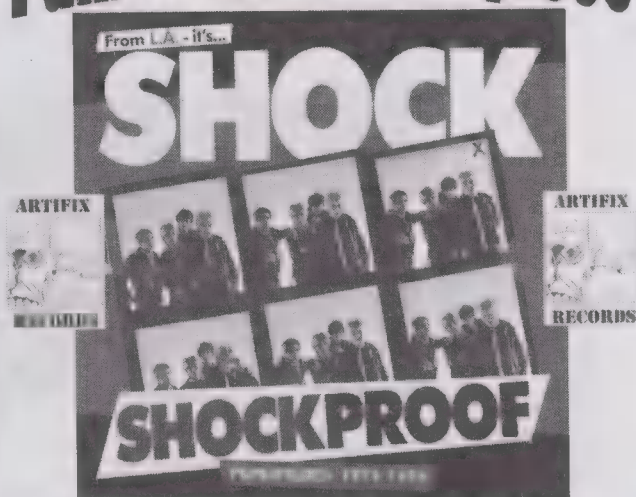
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Rachel Framingheddu's Photo Page

The Carpenters, Gainesville, FL 11/01/14

AZTLAN UNDERGROUND

PART II



It never ceases to amaze me how diverse the punk experience can be. For some, it's just a passing phase they "went through as a kid" before cashing in their trust fund and securing their corner office at the family corporation or law firm. For others, it's a philosophy, to paraphrase Steve Martin, that fucks you up for the rest of your life. For the latter, it empowers them to actively resist the veil of twisted truths and lies foisted upon the population to maintain the status quo. Sometimes, it can also lead to personal connections to histories and traditions often lost in the morass of the dominant culture.

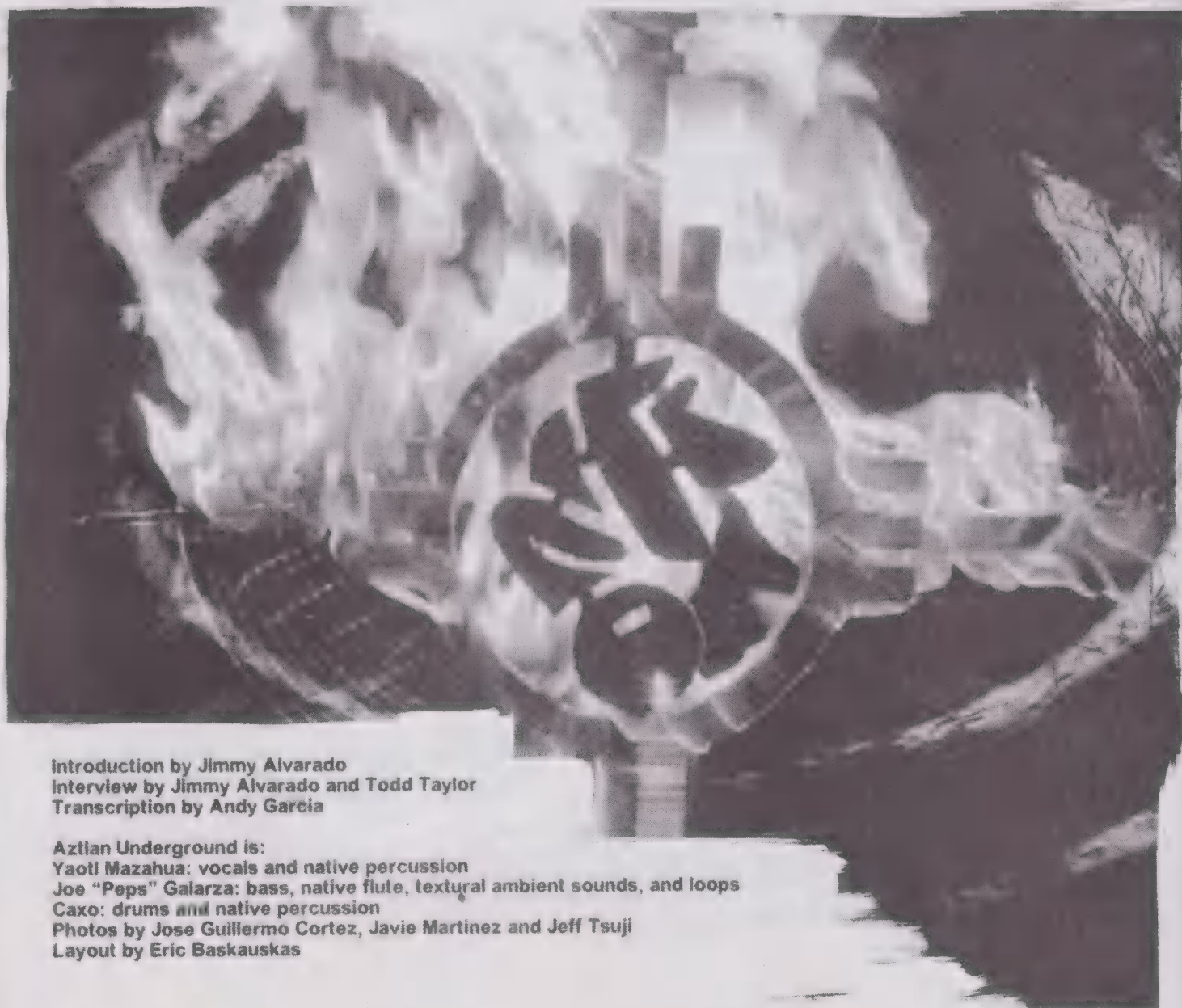
With roots reaching back into 1980s hardcore punk, Aztlan Underground has taken that scene's insurgent fire, melded it with hip hop and Native American influences, and infused it with customs and cultures dating back millennia before even Rome got its groove on. In a world of increasingly plastic poseurs and prefabricated "artists" who'd rather shimmy mindlessly than take creative risks or make a career-killing faux pas, AUG continue to "step in a revolution manner," stand in solidarity with the world's indigenous populations, and speak truths those in power would prefer to be either forgotten or eradicated.

While the punters slice, dice, and sub-sub-categorize parts of the underground into irrelevancy, lifers like AUG continue to push beyond terms like "hip hop," "rock," and "punk" and offer glimpses of the possibilities that lay beyond for those willing to commit their lives to their art and working toward a better world for all oppressed peoples.





AUG promotional photo at the oil refineries
in Wilmington, CA, 2010 | JOSE GUILLERMO CORTEZ



Introduction by Jimmy Alvarado
Interview by Jimmy Alvarado and Todd Taylor
Transcription by Andy Garcia

Aztlan Underground is:
Yaotl Mazahua: vocals and native percussion
Joe "Peps" Galarza: bass, native flute, textural ambient sounds, and loops
Caxo: drums and native percussion
Photos by Jose Guillermo Cortez, Javie Martinez and Jeff Tsuji
Layout by Eric Baskauskas

Jimmy: Have you guys ever caught any shit for your lyrics? Because you guys are very straightforward with your lyrics and they don't pull any punches.

Peps: Tell him about Arizona.

Yaotl: Arizona, man. We got banned. "We didn't cross the borders, the borders crossed us" got banned with the books. (As part of an anti-Mexican backlash fueled by hysterical conservatives fearing a "reconquista" of the southwest, Arizona passed HB 2281, which outlawed a Mexican-American Studies program in 2010. The Tucson Unified School District then infamously "confiscated" several related books and other materials in 2012, including William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.) I don't know if you read about, during the...

Jimmy: Yeah.

Yaotl: They banned our song...

Jimmy: Which one?

Yaotl: ... "Decolonize." They banned that song in schools and all that.

Jimmy: [laughs] Because they were playing it in schools everyday or something?

Yaotl: For us, that's our Grammy.

Todd: Hell yeah, dude. That's a badge of honor.

Yaotl: Dude, exactly. But what's funny, is that the part they could've used to totally put us down or dismiss what we were about, they didn't fucking use. They just used, "American dream, only for some / play the role and forget where you came from." They highlighted that, when they could've fucking easily put "Get the fuck out!"... [laughter] "...Wasichu, eater of the fat! Waster of earth mother and people! Get the fuck out!" They could've put that, bro. [laughs]

Jimmy: They were just looking for the words that they identified as being anti-American.

Peps: Right, true, true.

Jimmy: For them, it's not even about being anti-white anymore, it's about being anti-American.

Todd: And they don't even want to use the swearing.

Peps: Exactly, and again, too, also the Minutemen always have us on their websites, analyzing "Decolonize" or even our lyrics.

Todd: Not the band though, [laughs] just clarifying.

Peps: No, no, no, no. Not the Minutemen, not Mike Watt.

Todd: [laughs]

Jimmy: So have either of you tried to get your F.B.I. file, just to see what it says?

Peps: I never thought of that, but I know we have a pretty good one [laughs]. To this point, even as we speak right now, I'm sure, you know.

Jimmy: Right, right, somebody's listening.

Peps: Yeah, yeah, of course

Yaotl: Uh-oh.

Peps: I know, sorry guys. But anyway...

Yaotl: How long does it take to get that anyway?

Jimmy: I don't know. You have to go through the FOIA (Freedom of Information Act), but it depends. My understanding is that it's even gotten harder now than it was under Bush to get it.

Yaotl: And they don't even release that, too, because I was telling you when I was trying to get a job in probation camps, and they do a mean background check, but, apparently, they don't even—apparently they only look as far as your D.O.J. criminal record. And that F.B.I. file is a different access that they don't show to people who are working with juveniles, you know what I'm saying?

Peps: Really?

Yaotl: So it's a trip. Even within law enforcement they don't have access. That's why if I get that probation camp job, it would be interesting, because I'm like, "Wow, they didn't look." Not that I feel that—what am I doing but freedom of speech, freedom of expression? Really, there's nothing terrorist, there's nothing illegal about what we're saying. What we're saying is just our history, asserting our rights as human beings.

Peps: And more than anything, it's always been about humanity, too.

Jimmy: Even at its most liberal, the American government has always been very, very touchy about anybody who criticizes...

Todd: Encroaching on their power.

Jimmy: Right, and that's why you guys have never minced words with regards to that...

Yaotl: Right, right, exactly.

Jimmy: To be honest, I'm surprised you guys haven't gotten the racism thing screamed at you.

Peps: They're looking for a good moment for it. [laughter]

Jimmy: And, ironically, looking at your lyrics, what could've been classified as maybe even racist lyrics would've been heavy-loaded at the beginning because you've gotten a lot more internationalist.

Yaotl: Since the Zapatistas, exactly.

Jimmy: Right, it's been more about culture...

Yaotl: A world culture.

Peps: World resistance.

Jimmy: ... and cultural struggles for every indigenous person.

Yaotl: Exactly, for human beings.

Todd: And just personal enlightenment, too.

Peps: Right.

Todd: And knowing the difference between really being proud of what you are, finding where your power comes from, and not using that as an act of oppression to other people.

Peps: Exactly.

Yaotl: You become the same colonial mindset that we're battling against, if you do something like that.

Todd: And that's where a good balance comes in, you know?

Yaotl: And that's what, to me, punk rock is. I like that when Facebook is all, "If you say you used to be punk, you never were."

Jimmy: Right. That's a very true statement.

Peps: It is.

Jimmy: You can't have gone through punk rock—I mean, maybe now, I don't know. We have thirty some-odd years into this now. For me, that name was something I could apply to myself, because I had always been this way. How can you now be *that* way, you

know? It's what you are. It just happened to be that that was the label.

Peps: You're still questioning, you know?

Jimmy: Yeah. I'm always going to be that person. So yeah, it's true. The other interesting thing is about the context that you guys speak. When you speak about Chicanismo, you've always downplayed the Mestizo, the "Raza Cosmica," the Latino, the Hispanic and stuff like that, and you've kind of pushed the indigenous aspect of it.

Yaotl: Right.

Jimmy: Which is interesting, because they're always kind of—especially in Mexico, because of the caste system—pushing Spanish is best, Mestizo is next best, and then you have the Indians who are down at the bottom.

Peps: So true. Again, as you mature, you really understand that there's a way of engaging more than just disengaging. You know again, within the Chicano music scene at the time with Quinto Sol and us coming up at the same time...

Jimmy: Yeah, we used to joke that Quinto Sol was the "kill the white-man band."

[laughter]

Peps: But the thing with them—at the time we were being labeled as that, too, and we weren't, you know? And now it's like...

Yaotl: People couldn't differentiate.

Peps: No they couldn't.

Yaotl: And we were having ideological tension between us. But because we were trying to follow the Zapatistas' example of "many worlds where many worlds fit," and true democracy, and we felt that within our community we needed to exercise democracy. Because even though we didn't agree with what...

Peps: ...they were saying.

Yaotl: ...with their perspective which is very kind of entrenched in the Nation of Islam's "white man is the devil" trip, which, to me, is the same paradigm of what we're trying to fight against. So they would always accuse us of, oh, we're sell-outs, we're the pro-gay white-lovers because we were pro-gay back then. So then we would...

Peps: ...question that.

Yaotl: But because we worked with them on this idea of trying to dialogue with each other to another level...

Jimmy: And enlighten each other.

Yaotl: ...and enlighten each other and we were getting pulled in. But with all due respect, it's conveyed in that way in this interview and not shit-talking, you know? It's just a matter of evolution and how it goes.

Jimmy: And we all kind of went through that. There were so many different perspectives in what they called the "Chicano groove" scene. There were so many disparate perspectives that were coming out of that. And, again, we used to joke about that with Quinto Sol, but I never had a problem with those guys. I get along with them, I got along with Quetzal, and I got along with all those people. Everybody had all these different ideas, you would find this commonality, and that's how you worked together.

Arizona, man.
We got banned.

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Peps live in the studio, 2011 | JEFF TSUJI

Peps: Exactly.

Yaotl: And that's the beauty of it. And the Zapatistas talk about it—"Many worlds where many worlds fit." The beauty in it is that we are all different and unique in our own little perspective.

Todd: Your story with the Zapatistas was amazing in the part where you go down there to Chiapas and you're like, "What can we do to help?" and they're like, "Oh no, no, you need to help yourself. You need to get your tools. You need to go back to your communities and you take these things back. We're fine."

Yaotl: Exactly.

Jimmy: That must've been very humbling too, because you're being told this by a bunch of guys in the fucking jungle with sticks.

Yaotl: With rifles. And there was low-intensity warfare going on against them, man. And they were telling us...

Todd: "Get your shit together."

Peps: We were using that sample on *Sub-Verses* right? It talks about that, "Find art or find your weapon in your own community to engage," you know? If it's art, painting, theater, or whatever. That was a vehicle to express, but more to engage for social change. That was always the goal to really uplift in that way, and again yes, with no guns, but this is our weapon—through music, through our work.

Jimmy: And you guys have been doing it. You guys have been very active in social/community activism and art beautification projects and things like that.

Peps: Definitely.

Yaotl: Like when you asked the question of how we became involved, we came out of it because we knew the importance, because of the racial experience coming from where we lived with white people and ignorance, and this sense of—well, we didn't feel we had a place. We were really motivated already to the identity politics, the band...

Jimmy: As a reaction.

Yaotl: ...Yeah, "I'm indigenous, you don't even know," like, "We didn't cross the borders, the borders crossed us," and "We're not wetbacks," you know? "Who's the real pilgrim?" trip like that, right? So that's why we were very centered on that, and we were initially—for a small moment very nationalist—until we were turned on by the Zapatistas and we realized that it's also a colonial mindset to be nationalist and to be flag and territorial states.

The indigenous worldview is that the earth mother is the mother of all people. We're all the children of the same earth mother and that we all have our different regions—our habitat, our origin—where we originate from, but we share the air, the same earth, the same fire, the same water. For us to stake a claim, "Only this is our territory," that's the same thing that's been imposed upon since 1492, you know what I mean?

So we evolved. The Zapatistas talk about, "Well, many worlds fit," and looking at the globe under the neo-liberal economic system that is really the I.M.F. and the World

Bank, you know? But it gave us an economic analysis of that. As much as even the western world talks about borders, those borders don't exist monetarily and economically...

Jimmy: Exactly.

Yaotl: ...exploitation-wise. So we were like, "Damn." We were a little in the dark.

Todd: You see the people who are in control of it are looking at it globally and they are using these arbitrary borders, divisions within divisions.

Jimmy: It's just like MDC said back in back in '83, "It's socialism for the rich and capitalism for the rest of you."

Peps: [laughs]

Yaotl: Interestingly enough, though, the indigenous worldview already held those ideas. Like if you look at *Indian Givers* by Jack Rutherford, he talks about how socialism, Marxism, and anarchism were role-modeled off of studying native societal values. And even...

Jimmy: ...Even the United States government.

Yaotl: So you see, there was like a full circle. Interesting that I got it though punk rock, but it was also part of the culture and part of a better way for all humanity and it's benefited all of humanity. It's kept this mindset of democracy, of real democracy; the Congress was going to be called "The Grand Council" after the Six Nations, right? And so there's just a lot of modes of society and self-governance that come from indigenous understandings or worldviews. The Zapatistas brought that back into perspective.

Jimmy: Kind of like what you were saying about going to a sweat lodge and realizing, "This is home." You're learning about all these politics and then you find out this shit's been going back generations.

Peps: Right, it slaps you in the face.

Jimmy: ...all these little fucking kids with mohawks. "Dude, you wouldn't even know how close you are..."

Peps: Right, it's so true. The parallels are so close that, again, it took that long to...

Jimmy: "Indigenous and you don't even know it." [laughter]

Yaotl: You guys are going to laugh. You guys are going to think I'm all nationalist here right now in a way, but I'm not because I'm telling you.

Peps: [laughs] Doesn't make sense.

Yaotl: Even the word "punk" is indigenous; it's ■ Delaware word for...

Peps: ...Ember.

Yaotl: Yeah, the fire ember.

Jimmy: Yeah, the thing you light fire with.

Yaotl: Yeah, because tobacco was introduced by native people, right? So back in those colonial times in the East Coast, they would call the little cigarettes "punks," because they looked like little embers, right? So the white people, who were, I guess, turning "injun," they (other whites) would tell them, "Man, you're all little punks" —they were acting like natives. In other words, they were pretty much ostracized, the first Europeans who started smoking cigarettes...dude, so they would call them punks. Because they would say "What is that, punk?" "You're a punk." So it's ■ trip, punk rock, dude... [laughter]

Jimmy: It came all the way around again.

Peps: Full circle, right? Full circle.

Jimmy: So going off topic ■ little bit here. Your first album came out in 1995, your second one came out in 1998, your third one came out 2009. That's a lot of time between things... [laughter] You guys think you're The Dickies, or influenced by Boston or something?

Peps: Nah. What happened was that we went through ■ lot of member changes and rebuilding all over again. So within '98—when *Sub-Verses* came out—to '99 ■ lot of the old members left. Even though we were playing the similar songs that were done in *Sub-Verses*, to recreate ourselves we had to start over again with a lot of new members. So we just took some time to eventually get the solid core group to write the last material that came out.

Yaotl: Then in 2003 the drummer we had from '99-'03, he ended up leaving so we ended up with Caxo. We were blessed to have worked with Caxo.

Jimmy: He comes from the backyards too, right?

Peps: Oh yeah, he's from Tezacrifico, Kontrattaque, Los Crudos, all those punk bands.

Jimmy: Yeah, he was in that band with Ignacio, Tezacrifico. I'm telling you, it's ■ small, incestuous little world.

Yaotl: Incestuous. [laughs]

Peps: It is, right? It's so small that you don't even know.

Jimmy: Everybody has been in a band with somebody else, you know?

Peps: So I guess that long gap that happened was that. I think it took at least like, ■ good

solid five years to write those songs. It took four, almost five to even record it, mix it, master it, and then put the whole concept of the artwork and elements put into that record. There's a lot that was put into that record. So it took that long to really get a good product out. We really wanted to come out stronger through all aspects of art and music, you know? It was a big shift from the *Sub-Verses*. With the *Sub-Verses* album we were always labeled or put in that same category as, "Oh, you guys sound like Rage Against the Machine," because it's like hip hop, rock, or whatever; punk in there, too. So, from that last record to the last self-titled record, we...

Jimmy: It's a stretch.

Peps: Yeah, we just took the whole element of, "Let's just reinvent ourselves completely. Let's clean the slate," and it's the core members that we are right now. It was just the four of us at the time that wrote the songs, and the concepts that came out, and the current issues that were happening—fucking Iraq and Afghanistan and the war at the time when 9/11 hit. We were there the day before 9/11 hit, you know?

We were inspired by that because we were right across the street from the World Trade Center Marriott, like out of my hotel room I could see the Trade Centers. Coming out of that element and doing some shows there with Welfare Poets and the commemoration of the thirty years of the Attica massacre and so on, with John Splitting The Sky (an activist who was a leader in the 1972 revolt in Attica prison, and was arrested in 2009 when he attempted to make a citizen's arrest on former president George W. Bush). All

Caxo and Peps, Chicano Park, San Diego, CA 2013 | JEFF TSUJI



of that inspired this last self-titled album. So that's why it has the elements of what's going on.

Jimmy: The "Message to the Dominant Culture." (Referencing one of the album's song titles.)

Peps: Right, well that one was a long time coming.

Jimmy: I remember when I listened to that record—for a lack of a better term—that was the "single" for me. It's three minutes long and it just encapsulates everything else that's going on in the whole album, you know what I mean?

Yaotl: Trip out.

Peps: Tell him, tell him.

Jimmy: That's your fucking period-point, you know, right there. Boom. And everything else kind of expands upon it.

Yaotl: That's dope. There was a lot of creative beauty that happened in that album and that writing. But there was also a lot of kind of overlooking of a lot of contributions that Joe himself would come up with and then it wouldn't be validated. And what ended up happening is the producer—and I want to give him props for that. I know we have a weird working relationship and I love him—we have our little trips but, I want to give him props for that, Manny Nieto. He (Peps) was jamming that bass line and what happened was... a certain member was like, "Whatever," but we were like, "That's dope." But he's (the producer) like, "You know what? I'm not going to charge you to record. I'm giving you guys a week and a half to write to that bass line, because I want that." Like he saw...

Peps: ...Because it wasn't going to be on the record, actually.

Yaotl: So I had lyrics and I was like, "I think I'm going to do this." Then Caxo and I met, then we recorded the bass line. We pretty much went in there and laid it down and then put guitar over it. It was driven by his bass line. And it was impromptu. Dude, it just happened. It was one of those beautiful...

Jimmy: Was it, "Our 1492 is your 9/11" or something like that?

Peps: "Your 9/11 is our Oct 12th." But again, it wasn't going to be on the record at the time, in the moment when we were writing. Because a lot of those songs—if you really listen to that whole record—it has all these hills and valleys, changes.

Jimmy: Oh, definitely.

Peps: All these little changes. We didn't have a song that would say, "Okay, this is a straightforward in-and-out" kind of thing. Then it took us at least a week and a half to kind of—even though it's straight forward octaves and so on—to actually come up with the concept on that, and with Yaotl bringing out the lyrics of "Message to the Dominant Culture." But yeah, we had that song, "Smell the Dead". At one point, we ended up dissecting it and taking the middle part out of it. We were going to make it into a more straightforward song. So when you're working with two-inch reel tape, you can slice it—"All right, we don't want this part, we're going to move this part in...."

Jimmy: Slice and dice.

Peps: Slice and dice, right. So that was going to be the more straightforward song, but then something happened in the middle part of

that song that was so powerful that we had to bring it back in, and then that's where that song complemented the whole record, which got nominated for the Native American Music award.

Jimmy: Definitely. That album works very well as a fully-realized piece.

Peps: Thank you.

Jimmy: The whole package is gorgeous, you know? And the music itself—each song has its kind of peak and its valleys.

Peps: Yes, it does. And there's a similar pattern going on.

Jimmy: And it just goes like that, it's like these waves crashing on this caustic fucking beach, like, "Wham! Wham!"

Peps: [laughs] Yeah, you're right.

Jimmy: And just when it starts to calm down, it just starts to go right back up again.

Peps: Definitely.

Yaotl: I love the way you... [laughs]

Jimmy: That's why I get paid the big bucks. [laughter]

Peps: And again starting it off—a lot of the time when some people first hear that record it's because the first song is in full Nahuatl, the traditional original Mexican language, and people are like, "Oh that's pretty cool because it's in the native language, but I don't know what he's saying. So it's rocking, but we don't know what he's really saying or what he's trying to tell us." I really felt that song itself—the first one at least—really set the platform to the rest of them coming in. Because even I got a sample of an indigenous record from Michoacán, and if you hear that little trumpet in the end, that's what it is. It's a traditional native trumpet kind of thing going on.

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Jimmy: Then you go into "Be God" and it's like the whole...

Peps: Right, it shifts everything.

Yaotl: Kick back, dude!

Peps: That's why he gets paid the big bucks. [laughter]

Jimmy: That's why I get paid the big bucks.

Peps: Nah, but maybe he can tell you a little bit about that, Yaotl, because I think...

Yaotl: "Moztllita"—so it's talking about the western world. It says that in the western world, love does not exist but love lives in our heart, we sing the sad songs, we sing the songs of love, we sing the angry songs. That's what it pretty much suggests.

Peps: Then it says, "Know that your creator lives in your heart."

Yaotl: "Know the Creator lives in your heart," that we live to see tomorrow and that if we don't understand it, it pretty much says that if we don't recognize it, then this love dies.

Peps: Or that the earth is perishing too, right?

Yaotl: Or that if the earth is sick, we're sick too. But it actually conjugates, so it actually makes sense. [laughs]

Jimmy: It sounds like that if you looked at it as a book, or as your introductory piece, it kind of lays out everything that happens afterwards...

Peps: Exactly.

Jimmy: ...and everything else kind of just goes back and touches on that.

Peps: Definitely.

Jimmy: So what's XRF? Explain that.

Yaotl: That was actually initiated in '96 because, like the story you brought out about the Zapatistas telling us, "Don't come over

here, you go back and organize over there." And pretty much their thing was you don't have to carry a gun to be a resistor. If you're a writer, write; if you're a teacher, teach; if you're a musician, do music; if you're an artist, do art and do whatever you can to try to bring dialogue so a better world can exist. So we thought, because they always talk about true democracy, true justice, true liberty, we thought, "If they can organize 30,000 indigenous people, who speak different dialects of Mayan—who at one time were at odds because of religious differences and territorial petty differences—how could we not come back to L.A. and try to organize the different perspectives within our own community of artists?"

Jimmy: Get along with each other.

Yaotl: Get along with each other and try to create a collective of artists known as XRF—Xicanos Records and Film, Xicano Revolutionary Front, or what have you, Xicano Rebel Front. So we came back and made a call-out and we hit Blues Experiment, we hit up Ollin, we hit up Quinto Sol, we hit up Quetzal and pretty much only Quinto Sol responded, but then other bands that were coming up like Subsistencia and Cihuatl Tonalí, they were down to do that. So what we did is we started—because back in the anarchist days there was always counter-celebrations of popular American holidays that brought to light the truth of stuff—that's where The Farce of July came from. There were like odd little events of what really happened on the Fourth of July, back in the anarcho-punk days, but we transferred it into, like, trying to say, "Is it really Independence Day for human beings who've existed here

for thousands of years before the system came over?"

Jimmy: And can't get out of the fucking prison cell, the economic prison cell that you put them in.

Yaotl: Exactly, so that's why we also celebrated *Thankstaking*, which is also a native atrocity, but anyways. So we started with that event and we got all the bands to perform and what it turned into is that every year the money would go to a specific cause—I think the first year was to Estacion Libre, which was a Zapatista kind of bridge organization between U.S. consciousness people and the Zapatistas in Chiapas. So all the bands would play—you'd have Quinto, you'd have Ozomatli, Quetzal would participate even though they weren't part of XRF, Ollin of course, everybody, Blues Experiment, Slowrider, different bands. So every year we'd try to have a different lineup but sometimes they're the same almost, but it was always for different events.

Jimmy: It was a different year.

Yaotl: Every year it would be different, for a different event.

Peps: Blackfire would participate too, from Navajo land.

Yaotl: Exactly, Casper, Tijuana No, Dead Prez.

Jimmy: And The Brat.

Peps: And The Brat, too.

Jimmy: The Farce of July—you guys are still having those shows every year as far as I know.

Yaotl: Yeah, we still have them.

Jimmy: Have you missed a year? I don't think you've missed a year.

Yaotl: No we haven't. We almost did last year.

Peps: Yeah, we did.

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Yaotl at "Skalloween" Show, Alpine Village 2012 | JEFF TSUJI

Yaotl: It came out wack, but... we need to organize now, actually, now that I think about it. It's February or whatever.

Peps: But it was definitely a way to bridge all of us to become kind of a support system, to help each other out and put each other's records out.

Jimmy: Like a collective mentality.

Peps: Yeah, collective mentality, exactly.

Jimmy: And I remember that it also extended into shows. I remember you guys with, I think it was with maybe with *Sub-Verses*, but you guys were doing that benefit for a record, it was at some place downtown...

Peps: MacArthur Park?

Jimmy: Yeah, that's the one, with SX-10. (A metal/punk side project for Cypress Hill's Sen Dog)

Peps: When they came at us?

Jimmy: ...When la jura [the police] came back and they were looking for Yaotl.

Yaotl: Yeah, that story's one of my most memorable moments, that night.

Peps: It was incredible.

Yaotl: We were trying to raise funds and as SX-10 played, was it *Thankstaking*?

Peps: No, it was the fundraiser for a CD, for *Sub-Verses*.

Jimmy: Yeah, I remember the fundraiser, and SX-10 played and I think Blues Experiment played.

Peps: Yes.

Yaotl: Well, what happened was that we had

the right to use that venue, but I guess it got overcrowded, it got packed.

Jimmy: It was a storefront or something, right?

Yaotl: Yeah, yeah.

Peps: Tito actually helped.

Jimmy: Tito from Ollin.

Yaotl: Well, anyways, and as you saw, it was packed, right? But, apparently, the police started harassing people in the front of the place. So people inside kept telling me, "Hey they pushed me, they did this, the police did that, they're harassing out here." So I was like, "What the fuck?" So, apparently, right when they got in to shut down the spot, I was all like, "Man, F-this and F-that. I heard that this is F'n going on, F-this and F-them." I was like straight out, and then the next band played, SX-10, and maybe played half their set...

Jimmy: Half the set, yeah.

Yaotl: ... and at that point, I think Cesar was running over there with them too, and that they [the police] were like, "Who is that? Who is that? I swear to God, who is that?" They were all on a mission...

Jimmy: All the cops.

Peps: Thirty cop cars outside.

Yaotl: I remember there was about nine cop cars out there, and they were like "Who is it? I swear to God, who is it?"

Jimmy: It felt like 1983 all over again.

Yaotl: Dude, "those punk rockers," exactly.

It was like a two-story, there was another floor...

Jimmy: Yeah, there was stairs. That was a crazy night, I mean there was a shit-ton of people at that place. And I remember, when me and my wife first started going out together, that was one of the gigs I took her to, you know? [laughter]

Yaotl: So I was up there on the second floor and I was just chilling and my brother-in-law comes up and tells me, "Dude, they're fucking pissed, bro. They want to fucking find you, bro. They're totally like, 'Who the fuck is he?' and we're like, 'I don't know, I don't know'."

So he took off his hoodie and he gave me his hoodie. I was like—fuck—they were evacuating our spot and it was close to the end. I go, "If I'm the very last, they're going to know... motherfucker." So I go, "Shit, I better go now." So I'm totally like this [head down, trying to look inconspicuous], and there are two cops on each side of the door, dude, with two lights, straight fucking looking for me. And I'm like, "Shit! Fuck!" So I start walking towards the door and they're looking at everybody, and they are right about to shine the light on me when fucking Andrew's group...

Peps: ...So this native drum group all of a sudden started drumming the drums.

Yaotl: Dude, in the middle of the street bro, they go "Ahhhh-ahhhhh-ahhhh!" So then, it



Illustration by GENETIC WIN/MONGU
JOE PER

We had to say what
we had to say, dude
That's what we're
about. If everyone
doesn't like us, fuck it.

flipped them all out. All the fucking placas (cops) looked in the direction of the drummers, and I'm all like *vroom* [sneaks by].

Peps: Right in that moment, dude.

Jimmy: Right the fuck out.

Peps: It was like a magical moment.

Yaotl: Holy shit. [laughs]

Jimmy: And we're inside and we were on the stairs watching. I remember when you went up on stage and SX-10 was playing and then we were like "It's over? That's it?" And everybody—just this wall of fucking people trying to get out. It was nuts, man.

Yaotl: But it was such a beautiful thing like, "Ahhhhhh-ahhhhh-ahhhh." Dude, that made me invisible, bro—all of a sudden I'm just—*shoom*—and they were still looking for me even after I walked out, because I thought they were going to fucking yell... "Hey come here!" But they were still out. They couldn't comprehend the drumming. It was almost like the fucking wagon times, bro. They never heard anything like that. It just blew their minds.

Jimmy: You got the fuck out there by the skin of your teeth.

Peps: Yeah, that was a pretty close call, definitely.

Peps: It's like when John Macias or something, Circle One or some shit going on.

Jimmy: Bum-rushing the door at the Olympic and shit.

Peps: Yeah, right! [laughs]

Jimmy: Again, everything has kind of come full-circle in a lot of ways. It was one of the questions I was going to ask you. You guys lived through the "Reagan Revolution," and you guys enjoyed the Clinton and the Bush years. How are you guys enjoying this Obama "post-racial America"?

Peps: Well, I don't know. For me at least, or even us as Aztlan Underground, when it started shifting to that, I already saw it coming. It was just a different mask. They were going to continue doing what they were going to do, but in this case they just had to win everyone over, you know?

Jimmy: They got the guy who could speak.

Peps: But, at the same time, win everyone over thinking that there is a form of hope coming because the fact...

Jimmy: He's not Bush.

Peps: Yeah, exactly. Well, with Bush, he was a straight out racist and with Obama, they would use him in a way they could win everyone back but, at the same time, manipulate.

Jimmy: I think they knew what they were doing.

Yaotl: Yeah, because before the election, everybody was fed up with all the bullshit, all the stuff that was going on with Bush and with Cheney being this Halliburton CEO and all that shit. I mean, it was just unabashed...

Peps: In your face.

Yaotl: ...and you saw your average Midwest American was like, "Fuck this system. It's fucking bullshit." But, meanwhile, during this time *Rolling Stone*, one dude named Matt Taibbi, an investigative journalist, talking about how he was: "From the information I'm gathering, McCain is not going to win,

but Obama is because the Wall Street paper is going to Obama. And so Obama is going to win no matter what."

So during that time we're already discussing that, and there was a little event in East Los—Olmecca was playing, and this isn't a bash on Olmecca or anything—and we got invited to play, and it was "un-earthed," just like, where we do drums and vocals, it was only Caxo and myself.

Peps: More tribal.

Yaotl: People were excited, I guess, about Obama and so Olmecca performed and it was at Nico's place in East Los, Teocintle. It's a small room, maybe a little bit bigger than this and he's performing. He's got all these youth, freshman probably from Cal State L.A. and Cal State Northridge, whatever. And they were like "Blah, blah, blah, change is happening and Zapatistas this, and Obama." And I was like "Okay," and this is no bash on Olmecca, but I think he was trying to be optimistic, you know? A lot of people were.

Jimmy: A lot of us were.

Yaotl: And that was the whole point. That's how smart they are.

Peps: They're ahead of the game.

Yaotl: They are like, "Damn, we got to quell this fucking revolution." So then we go up and I'm all, "They're going to bring Obama in and you're going to be, 'Oh, everything's cool,' but fucking bullshit. It's going to be the same fucking shit. I don't care that he's black and that's exactly why..." I was going off, dude. And then everyone just started walking away.

Jimmy: They're like, "Shit, he's angry."

Yaotl: Except for Ruben Guevara [legendary East L.A. musician, who's played with Frank Zappa, Ruben & The Jets, and Con Safos, among others].

Yaotl: He's all, "Heck yeah!" [laughter]

Peps: Old school and shit.

Jimmy: An old hippie dude, he's like "Fuck yeah!"

Yaotl: The whole room just fucking left, bro.

Peps: Well, because he knows the history, too. Patterns, you know.

Yaotl: Talking about what the fuck happened, right? Dude, it was crazy. I remember Caxo was like "You know what, dude? We had to say what we had to say, dude. That's what we're about. If everyone doesn't like us, fuck it."

Jimmy: Right—different face, same system.

Peps: Exactly, you know, because we saw it coming, man. They just had to paint a different face on it. They're like, "All right, let's just shift it, but let's still manipulate."

Jimmy: And yeah, all these people he's put into power. People from corporations are all the people he's filled his cabinet with.

Yaotl: Exactly, exactly dude. Goldman Sachs ex-heads. I love that dude, Matt Taibbi. But it's crazy how we do have a limited sense of—we have a freedom to speak up to an extent, right? Even though we say the truth, we are tame, considering what happened to Michael Hastings, a guy from *Rolling Stone*, thirty-three-year-old guy who topples the commander of the army because he captures

him saying—after being embedded with the troops, seeing all the combat and bullshit going on—he talks about him and points out he's saying, "Oh yeah, Obama is a pussy and Obama is a little bitch and he was scared of me, man." And he exposes that that happens. Then after, he's about to put out a thing on the CIA—he told everybody, "Yeah, I got this exposé. It's going to blow people's minds." And because he had already done that shit...

Peps: They caught him.

Yaotl: ... he sent out e-mails. "Dude, I'm being followed." But how they fucking downplayed his fucking death (Hastings died June 18, 2013 in a car crash. Subsequent press reports called the crash "suspicious," because of the emails he sent out the day before, which also indicated he believed he was being followed by the FBI), is that they said, "Oh, he used to be a meth head" and he said he was relapsing or whatever. But even the head of homeland security said, "There is reason to believe that intelligence agencies for major powers—including the United States—know how to remotely seize control of a car. So if there were a cyber attack on his car, and I'm not saying there was, I think whoever did it would probably get away with it." So even his white privilege couldn't save him, bro.

Jimmy: No, just like Gary Webb, the guy who brought up the whole crack cocaine Contra thing. He had all his shit straightened out. They fucking destroyed that guy. He ended up killing himself because they just made his life so fucking miserable because he told the truth.

Peps: Pushed him to that edge.

Jimmy: And that's what I was saying before. That's why I was kind of being facetious—"Have you guys checked your FBI file lately?"—because that kind of shit still happens, you know? It's funny, at the same time it's like since Bush, especially since Bush, everything is so out in the open that you're almost desensitized. I watched that movie *Dirty Wars* the other day, which is about the drone attacks, and about how we were fighting in Afghanistan and the Afghani people supposedly loved us until we started bombing them with these fucking drones.

Yaotl: Exactly.

Jimmy: And that it started off with a couple of tribal areas and now it's become an undeclared war that the United States is in over 127 countries.

Yaotl: Exactly.

Jimmy: And that's under Obama, who's supposed to be this big fucking "change," and he's bombing more fucking people and killing more people than Bush was.

Yaotl: O-Bomb-a.

Peps: O-Bomb-a. [laughs]

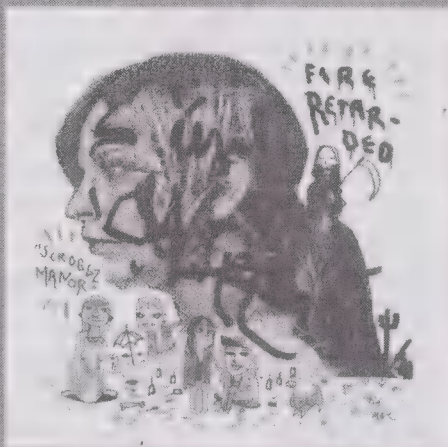
Yaotl: And he's had the most deportations of any President...

Peps: Oh yeah, throughout history.

Yaotl: ...hundreds of thousands.

Jimmy: He's got one of the most secretive governments, and they supposedly were going to be...

Todd: Transparent.



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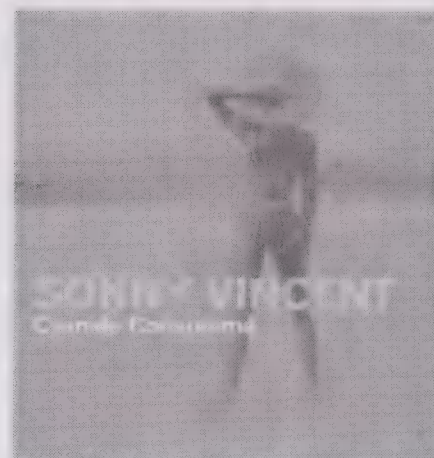
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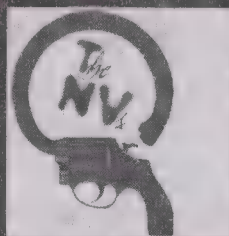
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Jimmy: ... and all that other shit and all this stuff that happened under Bush was going to stop. It just got worse.

Todd: It's more nuanced and complicated and when you try to say, "Hey, these are all the problems," people are just like, "No, it's better than Bush."

Peps: Exactly.

Jimmy: When actually it's not, you know?

Peps: They don't know the inside of what's been going down.

Todd: It's also extremely manipulative of people too, I think.

Jimmy: And they did the same thing under Clinton. Everybody was like, "Clinton was so much better than the Reagan/Bush years." That's when NAFTA was pushed through. That's when neo-liberalism became this huge fucking thing and became the go-to place to go, you know? You give people iPods and you give them these fucking cell phones that are the modern equivalent of those calculator watches and they're all so busy being happy about that, they don't realize all the shit that's happening to them...

Peps: ...what's really going on, in the background.

Jimmy: ...and they go back to their go-to's: they blame Asians, and they blame the Mexicans, and they blame everybody but the people who are actually doing it to them. I'm surprised that there is this backlash against the rich. It's only going to be a matter of time until they find that somebody to scapegoat, because there is no way they are going to give up their power.

Peps: I feel like, even within this upcoming election, if it comes down, it's going to get even worse and more bluntly in your face.

Jimmy: They don't fucking hide it.

Peps: No, they don't. They don't need to. And, at the same time, people don't even see it for what it is, as bluntly as it is. They are just letting it happen, you know? They are so desensitized that they let it happen—"Oh, who cares? Fuck it." They don't realize that it affects them directly, but it does.

Yaotl: It's weird. It's almost like the information highway—the networks of information that we have so much access to now—it's almost intoxicating. I heard Hanin Elias from Atari Teenage Riot, she got interviewed. I'm a fan of hers. She's interesting and made a good point in her interview. She's like, "What's really harrowing now is that we don't really need to be out there saying what's going on, but now that the youth do know what's going on, they are so saturated they are apathetic because they end up easily distracted by the silliness of what's all over the internet..."

Peps: So true.

Yaotl: ...So even though they're like, "Oh yeah, the system is screwing us, and religion is stupid..." it's almost like creating people to become—almost medicating them. And so, I was like, "Wow, that's an amazing point," because it's very true. It seems like you have like, "Hey did you know the system...?" "Yeah I know, but..."

Jimmy: "Yeah, but Paris Hilton did another porn movie again." [laughter]

Yaotl: Yeah, I saw that. [laughter]

Jimmy: And you're living vicariously through all of that, too. And it's funny because, again, going back to '82-'83, those records that were so important to us and had opened up our eyes at this point, personally, I can't think of a record coming out today that could've...

Peps: Get that level.

Jimmy: ... and I listen to them—but I mean, I listen to a lot of records—I don't think there is going to be any one of them anytime soon that's going to have that kind of visceral impact on such a level as those records, because of the fact that everything has become too oversaturated. And at the same time, there are so many different "truths" out there now, so you're getting bombarded and, at this point, you don't know what's fucking real and what's not anymore.

Yaotl: Exactly.

Peps: So true, dude.

Yaotl: Another good point. That's what's a fucking tripped-out situation, bro. That's why one of the songs, "She Rids Herself", one of the new songs we've written is. It's inspired by a conversation with my son and also a conversation with Thomas (Benally, a Diné, or Navajo, friend of the band). One day I was taking him to practice with us and he was like, "Hey man, you know what dude? It's cool what Aztlan Underground does. You put out stories and traditions. We've been instructed to watch the white man's world kill itself and let's see if we survive it, because it's on the brink of killing itself. And so when people are "saving the earth"—like George Carlin figured out—

it's all about people saving themselves. So we just got to see if we survive it."

Jimmy: We're just going to sit back and "watch the whole shit-house go up in flames." (Paraphrasing a famous bit of Jim Morrison stage banter.)

Yaotl: ...in his drunk wisdom, like fucking Charles Bukowski. Sorry, I had to put that in there. [laughter] But he is dope. He was also sharing some sacred knowledge. And then my son—he's nineteen now but at the time he was seventeen—he was like, "Dad you know there's no future, there's no future..."

Jimmy: Sound familiar? [laughter]

Peps: [singing] No future! No future!

Yaotl: ...and I'm like "What the fuck?" Unsolicited, dude. Telling me, "Dad..."

Peps: "Why did you bring me into this world?" [laughs]

Yaotl: Right, right. He used to tell me, "I'm not going to have kids."

Todd: "Thanks, dad."

Yaotl: And so no wonder they are saying this generation is a fucking "party" generation.

Jimmy: They've got nothing to lose.

Yaotl: Exactly, and that's what "She Rids Herself" is about. It goes, "Speak to language / grovel to the rhythms of the off-beat / enjoy the laughter of servitude / the comfort of scripted direction / the bliss of ignorance floats this capsizing boat into oblivion / into the abyss of no return / we dance the dance of the final call / concurrent with the sorrows of new generations with no tomorrow / hooting and hollering all the while / surfing the waves of a crumbling

AUG (Rudy, Bean, Yaotl) backstage after "Battle of Mexico City" gig, with Tom Morello and Zack De La Rocha of Rage Against The Machine, Mexico City, 1999



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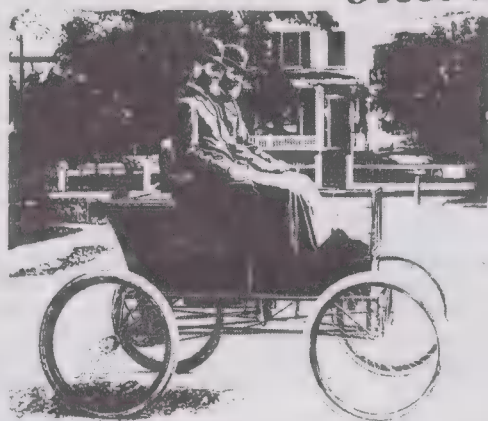
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We're just the people who pose the questions and let everyone else create their own analysis.

existence / but no need to concern however for it just is the great cleansing / grandmother cleaning it up / wiping it clean / ridding herself of infection and negative energies." To me that was just a testament to what's going on.

Jimmy: The earth getting rid of the parasites.

Peps: Yeah, cleansing herself.

Peps: And it's true in a way. I mean, to this point, where are we going? Where is this place? In ancient cultures—to even our culture—and, ceremonially, it's to renew the earth, to bring things in balance in a lot of ways. But, again, for our future generation, where they're at now, they aren't even seeing that element now, and that's a sad situation, man, because where are we as humanity, right?

Jimmy: We live in world where capitalism can't survive any more, you know? You can't buy a fucking thing, you can't work a job. In Los Angeles, you can't find a job that will pay you enough to live in a fucking apartment, let alone buy a house, let alone buy food...

Peps: No, right.

Jimmy: ... let alone raise a kid, or put them into college and shit, because they are already raising the price of the colleges.

Peps: I read a quote today that said, "When the last tree is cut down, the last fish eaten, and the last stream poisoned, you will realize that you cannot eat money." I was like "Wow, that's incredible." That's where it's at.

Todd: I get into really heavy thoughts too, like, "Life is death, death is life," too...

Peps: Of course, a balance.

Todd: Yeah, it's always a turning wheel. And then it comes back again to, how do you process it? How do you deal with it personally? You can deal with society on a large scale only so much and then it gets super fucking depressing. But, if you can control what you're doing and hopefully put that out, even on a small level...

Jimmy: And change your world.

Todd: ... and change your world and have little, small parts you're secure with...

Peps: Live by example, in a way.

Todd: Yeah.

Yaotl: And that's exactly—I feel—where we're at. We're just doing what we can, and we're sharing what we can.

Todd: Because I get overwhelmed. [laughs]

Peps: No, you do, you do. But I think the medium of music and art in general really can push those. We're just the people who pose the questions and let everyone else create their own analysis.

Todd: Living by example too, I think, is huge.

Peps: Yes, I agree.

Jimmy: As an artist, do you think that art and politics can live separately, or do you think they're intertwined?

Peps: I think they're intertwined. I mean, even at the time when I started—at age seventeen—trying to find myself in culture and participating in the Big Mountain struggle and all of that, I remember a lot of the elders would say, "Don't mix politics with spirituality." But then I realized, "Then what are we doing here?"

Jimmy: They're one and the same.

Peps: Yeah, it had to be merged. So, for me, art was always the vehicle to really pose those questions again, and, more than anything, it's the way of life to really question. To really be used as a vehicle to expose truth and tell truth, at least through your eyes and what you see, and allow everyone else to analyze it and make their own analysis of it. Because, again, we aren't saying that we know certain things, because we don't. We're still picking up the pieces from where we left off, but more than anything it's all about bringing in that little seed of a question to make you grow. And if you agree or disagree, that's fine, too. You can always agree to disagree. It's like a dialogue, ■ true dialogue.

Jimmy: You can take inspiration from people you disagree with.

Yaotl: [looking at his cell phone] I was trying to check in. You guys don't have it on here, huh? I was going to check in at Razorcake...

Jimmy: [laughs]

Peps: We're in the underground. We're in the bomb shelter.

Jimmy: We're in the bunker.

Peps: [laughs]

Jimmy: So what do you guys think about pie?

Todd: Yeah, let's end it with pie.

Peps: We'll move on to more happy things.

Jimmy: Is it peach pie? [laughter]

Peps: I love peach pie, more than any other pie. [laughter]

Jimmy: I guess, a little more esoteric...

Yaotl: Pinky pie. [laughter]

Jimmy: Pinky pie. [laughs] What's the most important thing you think you've managed to take from punk rock, looking back at your existence so far? What is the one thing you can see as a thread that you think was the most important one you've managed to retain?

Yaotl: I think it's to be a critical thinker.

Todd: It's a huge one.

Jimmy: Question everything.

Peps: Yeah, question everything, definitely.

Yaotl: That's what we're blessed with. I think that saved all of us, it saved our lives. So we try to do it, continue that tradition with the art.

Todd: That's huge.

Peps: What else? I know there are other things.

Todd: I think with being a critical thinker, you're inherently political in your actions, because you've dealt with stuff that comes at you when you're not asking for it, in a large mass. If you just take it, you're just a product of that. By resisting it—or even its existence or why it's there—it's still right in front of you all the time. Questioning. That's inherently political, even without a big "P."

Yaotl: Exactly.

Jimmy: The most political act you can do is ask, "Why?"

Peps: Yes, exactly. For me, even as an educator and teacher—I teach in juvenile hall detention centers—my question would always be—to at least our youth—"If you don't know your past, then you really don't know your future," you know? It's like you really have to know a foundation of where you're from and where you're at. And, again, humanity in the spectrum of we're all in this together definitely, but cultural identity: where you come from and especially when you start building those relationships with Mother Earth, because, more than man-made law, it's natural law.

Jimmy: It's a hell of ■ lot more internationalistic.

Peps: Yes, exactly. So punk rock, I think, from that time to where we're at now, I really feel it's building those relationships all over again to being a critical thinker. But, at least within our music, it's rebuilding those relationships with the natural elements. The gourds that we use with rattles are plants, the flutes, the wind. Back in the '60s, even when Nuyorican music brought in the conga... well, in our case, we bring in the huehue, which is the ancient drum—we call him the "old man." But again, it's always ■ must to rebuild those relationships.

Jimmy: And stop and listen to the things we don't really listen to anymore.

Peps: Of course, of course. Because I think even after we're gone, that's still going to exist.



BOILERMAN

The first time that I saw Boilerman, I felt like they had the potential to be an influential band, one that would help set the tone and parameters for this ongoing conversation that we call "punk rock." It ain't rocket surgery; three guys who are intimately familiar with their instruments, refuse to make concessions to genre convention in their song craft and presentation, and are possessed of equal measures bile and humor have rewritten the rules in this little corner of the music world many-a-time. The second time I saw Boilerman, I realized that it didn't matter at all if they ever got that due, because they were already a phenomenal band. As a student of the all-but-forgotten, to me quality counts a lot more than reach.

They are the high-octane alternative to modern pop punk. They cannot be relegated to an elemental good-time soundtrack; they simply demand too much of the listener. Not to say they're necessarily superior, just that sometimes you want a sugary latte and sometimes you want your coffee as dark, thick, and bitter as mud. Wake up and smell the ripping guitar leads, charging rhythm section, and throat-shredding vocals. May we all be lucky enough to twitch along to the Boilerboys on their quest for a singular blend for years to come. Turn the page, join us in Jim's kitchen, and let them pour you a cup.

Interview by Shannon Z. Thompson

Photos by Patrick Houdek

Layout by Matt Woefully Average

Kris – complain, bass

Jim – guitar, vox

Joey – drums, hype man



Shannon: You all have your own fairly active record labels (Nervous Habits, Hip Kid, and Ice Age). Do you all just think that highly of your own taste?

Jim: Yes.

Kris: Well, yeah.

Shannon: Or hate money that much?

Kris: That too.

Joey: It's mostly hating money.

Kris: With the exception of Joey, we all have great taste.

Jim: Yeah, he puts out records for bands like The Valenteens (a band Kris is in).

Joey: I'm going to. If they ever finish it. I have to hear it first. It might suck shit.

Jim: I do hate money. It bums me out so much.

Kris: "I go to work every day just so I can live, and I don't even like money." (Dystopia)

Shannon: Kris, are there any good bands?

Jim: In general? No. No, there are very few.

Joey: What about that one you liked recently?

Kris: Skrewdriver? The alt-rock shoegaze band from England? No, there are cool bands every once in a while.

Joey: Okay, please clarify that! I don't want...

Kris: Skrewdriver is Swervedriver. Every

time I look at it written, I read "Skrewdriver," and get really confused for a second. "Why is there a fucking..."

Joey: Get all pissed that there's a Skrewdriver record at the record store, then you're like, "Ohhhh."

Kris: On Spotify. I look at my Spotify playlist and I'm like...

Jim: When did I like racist oi?

Kris: When did I like bad oi, regardless of its racial undertones? But yeah, Swervedriver is cool. There's a lot of cool stuff coming out of Philly right now.

Jim: Cheesesteaks, RAMBO, Pointless Fest.

Kris: There's some cool stuff in Chicago. I'm a brat, so I'm not a good person to ask about anything.

Shannon: That's why I did it. So I've heard you guys described as "pop punk for hardcore kids" or played by hardcore kids. I feel like you are a lot harder to pin down musically than many of the bands that you play with on tour. Do you feel that that's been an advantage or a disadvantage?

Joey: I've heard people say that we're too hardcore for the pop punk kids and too

pop punk for the hardcore kids. So in that regard, it's kind of a disadvantage, but I don't really care.

Kris: I think it is an advantage in that it makes me feel better about the music we write, because I think we're doing something that we like more regardless of what other people think. But I do think it makes other people a little more apprehensive about us. They're like, "This is not all of one thing I like."

Jim: One plus side that I find, though, is that the people who really like us tend to have pretty eclectic tastes, similar to all of us. So I feel like less people like it, but the people who do like it, like it a lot, because it's not... I don't want to say not more of the same, but it's something a little different. I feel like I would rather engage with people who are more like-minded. I find people more interesting if they have a broader view and a broader palette of things they like, rather than, "I just like pop punk" or, "I just like hardcore."

Joey: "I just like to pogo."

Jim: Yeah, well, everyone likes to pogo, but sometimes you want to pogo to Screeching Weasel and sometimes you want to pogo



to Discharge. I don't pogo to Screeching Weasel anymore.

Shannon: Strictly no pogoing since the incident (in 2011 where Ben Weasel swung on a female audience member)?

Jim: Yeah.

Shannon: But you have covered Screeching Weasel since then.

Jim: Yeah, I mean, someone's got to play Screeching Weasel songs who isn't an idiot.

All: [laughter]

Shannon: Yeah, I was thinking when I wrote that last question, I don't know if that description has become more or less apt over time. You're less of a straight pop punk band

than you were—the newest stuff you've recorded has a lot of really weird elements in there that not a lot of people are doing.

Jim: I was thinking about that recently; I'm a little bit concerned. I don't think pop punk will be a reasonable descriptor anymore. There are elements of it, but not so much. Wells from 86'd (Records), who is doing the 10", described it as the Born Against/Screeching Weasel split in one band. I think that's a pretty good description. It's getting less and less "pop punk," if you're going by...

Shannon: Strict definitions.

Jim: Yeah, exactly. Very few of our songs have ever had choruses, which I realized a

little while ago, and they're not easily sing-along-able. But I do think they're catchy. Whenever someone asks me to describe the band, I have the hardest time.

Shannon: I think that's universal though.

Jim: Yeah, that's true. I usually go off of what other people say. [To Joey] Yeah, that's fine.

Joey: Let the record show that I am asking for ■ piece of chewing gum, and Jim said yes.

Shannon: That's interesting, because I feel like the guitar parts get stuck in my head or are memorable more so than the vocal parts, which is backwards from how a lot of pop punk bands do it. There's ■ big emphasis on participation and group sing-a-longs, which you don't really do.

Jim: Very rarely. Yeah, we always write the music first, so I think that might come partially from that, and I try to write vocal parts that aren't boring.

Kris: I mean, I joined Boilerman because I thought it was good.

Shannon: Yeah, there are catchy parts or choruses in some songs, but there are so many changes and different parts going on around it that it ends up being less of a centerpiece and more of ■ hidden jewel.

Jim: I like that.

Kris: A diamond in the rough.

Shannon: How does it feel to no longer be straight edge's ambassadors to pop punk? [pointed glance at Joey]

All: [uproarious laughter]

Jim: Bad!

Kris: Shameful!

Jim: I was in the shower the other day—this is weird—and I was thinking about...

Joey: Me?

Jim: You! And I was thinking, there's nothing wrong with breaking edge except that you're no longer straight edge and therefore ■ poser and therefore will die because...

Jim and Shannon: Only posers die.

Jim: I mean, Aaron Cometbus bought Joey a drink so...

Joey: Yeah, if I hadn't already broken edge, that would be the time to.

Jim: Joey recently told me how much he likes The Who, which is pretty suspect. That would've been an edge break regardless!

Shannon: Musical edge break.

Jim: Yeah, there are a lot of ways to break edge.

Kris: Admitting you like The Dead, admitting you don't think The Dead are horrible, admitting you don't think The Dead are the worst band ever.

Jim: Calling them "The Dead."

Joey: Speaking of The Dead...

Shannon: We're talking about the Dead Kennedys, right?

Joey: No, The Grateful Dead.

Kris: [vomiting noises]

Joey: For a job I pedicab, and I pedicabbed a Phish concert. They did three days in Chicago a few weekends ago. In my first ride there, I got some people with a cooler, and they were like, "Hey, can you take us up closer?" And I'm like, "Oh yeah, what you got in the cooler?" They're like, "Tea." "How much are you selling it for?" They say, "Twenty dollars." There are mushrooms in the tea and

I've heard people say that we're too hardcore for the pop punk kids and too pop punk for the hardcore kids.

they ask if I want to trade for a ride and, you know, I'd rather have money. I don't want to be hallucinating while I'm trying to drive people around.

Jim: Do you want me to have that when I'm riding around with you in the back?

Kris: They don't care. They're Phish fans.

Joey: About half of the Phish fans offered me drugs in exchange for rides.

Jim: If I was a Phish fan, I would gladly take death whenever it came.

Joey: I ended up leaving, because it was terrible. So I haven't started liking the Dead or Phish.

Jim: He wants to though.

Kris: The Grateful Dead is straight up the most hick shit I've ever heard in my life, and Phish is just terrible.

Jim: The first time I heard those bands recorded, I couldn't believe it. I was astounded that that's what it sounded like and that people like it and listen to it.

Kris: But, straight edge. Straight edge is basically a frat, so it's not that big a deal. Like, straight edge sucks. I'm straight edge, and I'm happy with my life decisions.

Shannon: Really?

Joey: You might want to re-evaluate.

Jim: You need some self-reflection time.

Kris: Hey man, I've got some cool records.

All: [laughter]

Kris: But straight edge culture really sucks. Everything sucks, says Dope.

Jim: So sayeth Dope. I've been told before that drinking coffee is not straight edge. Then I'm not straight edge! That's how little I care. I don't buy new sneakers, I've never owned a Champion hoodie—brand or band—so I don't even know if I am straight edge. Not really. I think I might not be. Unit Of Pride is the worst band I've ever heard.

Joey: I don't think Jim is straight edge, because have you seen him try to two-step? Not very coordinated.

Jim: I've gotten a lot better at stage dives though. I've been pretty good at diving lately.

Kris: I have the opposite problem.

Jim: You're great at two-stepping unless your leg gets broken.

Shannon: Did your leg get broken two-stepping?

Kris: Yeah, I broke my leg in the pit and kept moshing.

Shannon: Who was playing?

Kris: Cold Lovers, another band from Chicago. It was like their third-to-last show and I was putting out a tape for their last show. They were good and I was moshing and I broke my fibula, then I kept moshing.

Jim: Then he played our hundredth show in a cast.

Kris: Carrie, who played guitar in the band, laughed at me when I told her I thought my leg was broken.

Jim: Yeah, when you told me, I was like, "Your leg's not broken. You can't break your leg that way!"

Kris: I didn't think so, either. I thought I had a muscle spasm! I woke up at nine o'clock and didn't call my parents until one in the afternoon. I elevated my foot at night and was like, "It'll probably be better in the morning" and then it was worse and I was like, "Is it broken?" I was weighing the odds of—if I get up and go to Milwaukee with Cold Lovers and it's broken, I'll do serious damage, but if it's not broken I'll have a lot of fun and just hurt, and if I go to the doctor and it's not broken I'll waste a bunch of money and time and bother my parents for nothing, but if it is broken it will be good. I Googled how to tell if a bone is broken. It wasn't poking out, it wasn't bruised at all. Then I just called my mom. "Hey, I don't want you to worry, but I might have broken my leg last night, and you have my insurance card. Can you take me to the doctor? Thanks mom!"

Shannon: Do you still jump during shows?

Kris: I do now, yes.

Jim: I remember your first jump coming back. It was a proud moment. It was beautiful, like watching a child take its first steps.

Shannon: I really like the aesthetic unity of all your major releases. Jim, you do all the artwork, right?

Jim: Yeah.

Shannon: Is there some idea behind the minimalist approach?

Jim: I definitely wanted there to be a cohesive aesthetic for everything. Joey did the artwork for the demo.

Joey: Very pixilated.

Jim: I just couldn't think of anyone to ask to do it, either—no one else who would even want to—so I just started doing it. I try to choose photos that go with the theme of the record, or something on the record. I just try to keep it simple. Our new record is the first release of ours since the demo that I haven't done the artwork for. It's a lot different.

Shannon: It looks pretty metal.

Jim: It does look pretty metal.

Shannon: Pretty nü metal.

Kris: We were listening to System Of A Down in Jim's car this week.

Jim: The whole week!

Kris: Well, I was only in there for part of the week. We're all avid Korn fans.

Shannon: But back on the topic of your artwork.

Kris: Why don't you want to talk about nü metal?

Shannon: I don't know if you've ever gotten this, but when the first 7" was the only thing you had out, someone told me it looked like "mysterious guy pop punk."

Jim: That's awesome! I think it always comes out looking way more like '90s Ebullition stuff or weird emo. I always think that I kind of bite Tommy Borst's flyer style a little bit. He's a guy who lives around here and has been in bands. He's in Carbon Leak right now.

Joey: Great band.

Kris: They're a good band. I will admit they're good.

Jim: No, I've never gotten mysterious guy pop punk. I never want it to look cartoony, I never want it to look fun. I want it to look serious and be taken seriously.

Shannon: So is that why you did a Waffle House layout tape?

Jim: That's where I get out all my dumb ideas is on the tapes. We have a tendency to do smaller runs of limited tapes. We did the Waffle House tape. We did a live tape. We did a discography CD. We did a full color foldout tape insert for the live tape that has a picture of Kris falling down. Live, in-the-radio-studio photos.

Joey: Which Kris actually jumped in the studio and then fell down.

Kris: What happened was when we were doing Strangers (a short-lived hardcore band that all the members of Boilerman were in) with Ralph, he would practice like he was playing a show. I thought that was a really good idea because I'm in horrible shape and I feel like I'm going to throw up after every set. So I was like, "I'll start practicing like I'm playing a show," and that only lasted for a little while because it's horrible and I don't want to feel like I'm going to die after practice. That was during the time when we played the radio set, so I decided to jump around, and yeah, I fell.

Jim: In terms of the Waffle House thing, we eat a lot of Waffle House on tour because why would you ever not do that? If you're anywhere near a Waffle House and you're not eating it, what's the point of living? So I decided to make Waffle House-themed art for our really long tour on which I hoped to eat as much Waffle House as possible.

Kris: We ate a lot of Waffle House.

Jim: We ate a pretty significant amount of Waffle House. Unfortunately, the East Coast has no Waffle Houses.

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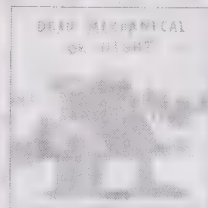
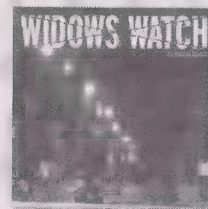
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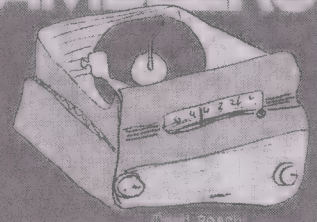
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Kris: Nightmare. Non-America.

Joey: We did go to Sheetz, though.

Jim: Yeah, Sheetz might be the next theme art.

Joey: Ehh.... Eh... [indicating a "so-so" motion with his hand]

Jim: Get out of my face!

Joey: No, I love Sheetz. I just don't think we should make a tape of it!

Jim: Yeah, probably not. It's not as true to my art as Waffle House.

Shannon: What can Kris and Joey (being vegans) even eat at Waffle House?

Kris: Hash browns.

Joey: Yeah, hash browns and coffee is pretty much all we can get.

Kris: Hash browns—I don't remember the terminology, forgive me—but mushrooms, onions, and jalapeños.

Jim: We were also given at a show in Fort Myers a couple bucks for a T-shirt and a bunch of Waffle House coupons for free waffles and coffee. Absolutely, I would rather have that than money!

Kris: Praise Jah!

Jim: I didn't know these existed!

Joey: That might be the only time we were offered something other than money that was worth having.

Shannon: You all play in a lot of bands, right?

Jim: Unfortunately.

Kris: Yeah. It sucks.

Shannon: Did you ever consult Kris's secret master list of band names when the time came?

Jim: Not yet. Soon enough.

Kris: Dale Earnhardt Señor will be a band.

Jim: Let's hear top five.

Kris: [scrolling through list on his phone] Oh man, there's a lot of band names on here.

Jim: I know, but let's be honest. Some of them are filler.

[Kris continues scrolling]

Jim: Velvet Elvis is definitely...

Kris: Velvet Elvis is good. I'm a big fan of Big Ass Pinky Ring. Electric Anchovy and Anchovy Omelet are two.

Jim: The reason I like Electric Anchovy is because of what the band is.

Kris: Well yeah—it's an a capella harsh noise band, and Anchovy Omelet is a surf band.

Shannon: They have a split, I imagine.

Kris: Well yeah. I was going to do a four-way comp with Velvet Elvis and Big Ass Pinky Ring.

Jim: The anchovy bands should do a split where they cover each other's songs.

Kris: I really like Male Pattern Baldness. Nacho Blood has been a favorite. Asshole Casserole. Leather Meatball. The Buttheads is a favorite of mine. Skater Lettuce, which I have to explain. I feel like skater lettuce is a term for marijuana, but to me skater lettuce

is the use of French fries as a topping. My friend Kyle folded up his pizza and started sprinkling French fries on it and said "skater lettuce," and that's when it hit me. Skull Bucket. Mushy Banana. Butt Spray.

Joey: You have a lot.

Jim: It could mean something you spray on or out of your butt.

Kris: Buttmunch, which was a band for one practice. We wrote songs about *Die Hard*. That's a movie.

Jim: Perhaps you've heard of it. A series of acclaimed films.

Kris: The greatest film trilogy ever made.

Shannon: Band names are very difficult, though.

Kris: They are. Luckily they come very easily to me.

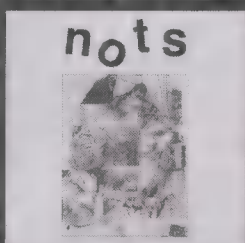
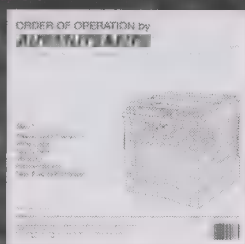
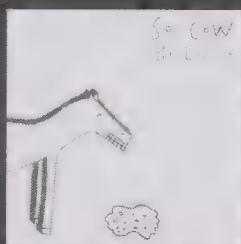
Jim: It's a gift.

Kris: I was blessed.

Shannon: How did y'all wind up with Boilerman?

Jim: We had a very hard time coming up with a band name, because all of the good ones are taken. I was watching this movie *Spirited Away*, it's a cartoon, and there is a character in it who is referred to once as the boiler man, and I was like, "That's a really cool band name." I texted it to Joey and he was like, "Well, I was already in a band called Boiling Over."

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Shannon: But you have covered Screeching Weasel since then.

Jim: Yeah, I mean, someone's got to play Screeching Weasel songs who isn't an idiot.

Joey: No, I was *currently* in a band called Boiling Over.

Jim: That's right! He was like, "I don't know if I want to do two 'boil' names." I was like, "All right, well, let me know what you decide."

Joey: And I decided it was okay.

Jim: I think it's for the best. I came up with some other ones that were questionable.

Joey: I was made fun of for a while. People would just say, "Do you want to go see Boiling Over Man?"

Jim: So yeah, it came from *Spirited Away*.

Shannon: What do you guys have against the Pope?

Jim: Nothing anymore. This new one is a real standup human being.

Kris: I mean, I am a proud Catholic.

Shannon: I've just seen you do that song explanation (for "An Open Letter to the Pope") most times I've seen you guys.

Jim: I try to change it. I try to not ever repeat it.

Kris: You never have.

Jim: I don't think I have, either. We cut down on playing it, which is good because I was running pretty thin. What I have against the Pope is that he's the figurehead for the Catholic Church, which is a terrible institution that way too many people are a part of that is a huge part of systematically taking away people's rights to do things that they should be able to do.

Joey: I grew up Catholic, so I have a lot—I have a big problem with the Pope.

Kris: Also that stupid hat. But that tight-ass ring is *sick*.

Jim: Yeah, that's true.

Shannon: Is it a big ass pinky ring?

Kris: I don't think so, but it should be.

Jim: He probably has a pinky ring. I feel like he has all the rings.

Kris: Layers of rings.

Jim: I want a Pope with knuckle tattoos that are of rings.

Joey: Or that say "THEE POPE."

Jim: Or "BEST POPE."

Joey: "ONLY POPE."

Kris: "LAST POPE."

Jim: I called it! I'm the last one!

Joey: I'm going to live forever motherfuckers.

Shannon: So you're doing a one-sided 10".

Kris: That wasn't our idea though.

Jim: It's surprisingly not our idea. I've wanted to do a 10" for any band I've been in for a long time.

Kris: 10"s are such a pleasing format.

Jim: We were originally going to do two different 7"s, like a darker one and a poppier one, and we were going to talk to people about it and I was casually talking about it with Wells from 86'd and I sent it to him because he wanted to hear it because he likes us.

Kris: He's a Boilerfan.

All: [laughter]

Jim: A term he coined that I'd like to propagate. He listened to it and was like, "Aw, this is awesome. I was supposed to not put out any stuff besides this one CD I'm doing this year, but I kind of want to do this." I was like, "Okay, cool." And he was like, "What do you think about doing a one-sided 12" of it?" And we were like "That sounds cool." I have a really specific format in artwork and stuff for the poppier one. I want it to be like a 7" single in those single sleeves, kind of like a Condominium sleeve, but for this one I don't care. Definitely do that. And then he was like, "It's the same price for a 10", and I was like "10"! Do the 10!"

Kris: Hell yeah.

Jim: It was Wells' stupid idea instead of our stupid idea, but I think it's great!

Kris: Wonderful.

Jim: I'm really excited.

Kris: Spectacular.

Jim: And, honestly, I like the fact that it's all on one side better. Because before it was four originals and a cover, and it would have been three pretty short songs on the A-side, then a significantly lengthy cover and another short song on the B-side. It was kind of lopsided. I'm much happier with it just going straight through in a line. I think it sounds better. I like the sequencing a lot better... and now we have a 10", so next we just need to do an 11" or 9".

Kris: All I want to do are 9" and 11" records.

Joey: [yelling from the bathroom] An 8" flexi!

Jim: I will say I would rather never put out a flexi than ever put out a flexi.

Joey: They're the worst format.

Jim: I have some that I really like, and I'm

like, "Well, I hope I don't want to listen to this more than ten times."

Shannon: I was told to ask why Joey is not allowed in Chicago hardcore.

Jim: Oh, that's true! Joey has been banned from Chicago hardcore by a professor.

Kris: Since 2011?

Joey: 2012.

Jim: What an embarrassing idiot. Go ahead. Tell how you got kicked out of hardcore by Professor Hardcore.

Joey: Oh, god. I was in a band that toured Europe and I quit the tour because the singer was a fucking idiot. Like, saying xenophobic shit on stage, so I quit. I walked off-stage in Toulouse, France. Basically, when I got back, there was some fallout and the singer told some people that I was no longer allowed in Chicago hardcore, and everyone laughed.

Jim: The first show that we (Boilerman) played after that, we played with Poison Planet, and Nick, who normally does very long-winded political speeches between songs was like, "I have something to say that's really important, everyone here needs to know about that maybe you haven't heard about before. I know I normally make speeches, but this is the most important thing I will ever say. We cannot stand for Joey Kappel in hardcore. He needs to get out. He is not welcome here, and we need to do everything we can to make that a reality."

Shannon: Was that speech a joke?

Jim: Absolutely!

Joey: Oh, yeah, yeah!

Shannon: I don't know this person or your relationship to them.

Jim: That was our first show back [upon Joey's return], and it was a show we played with a bunch of friends' bands. So Joey got banned from hardcore.

Joey: Yeah.

Jim: And that band broke up.

Kris: They are not broken up!

Jim: No, they are broken up. They have a new band.

Kris: Can I speak to the singer of this band's intellectual prowess?

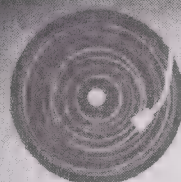
Joey: Sure.

Kris: He's like thirty-something?

Joey: He's probably twenty-nine?


Kris: And he's going to school for his Ph.D.?

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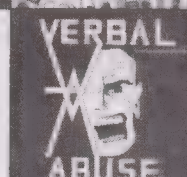
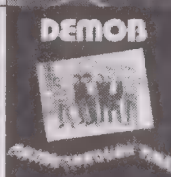
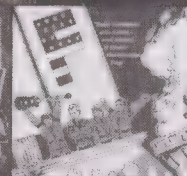
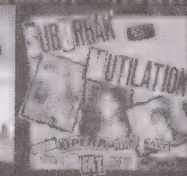
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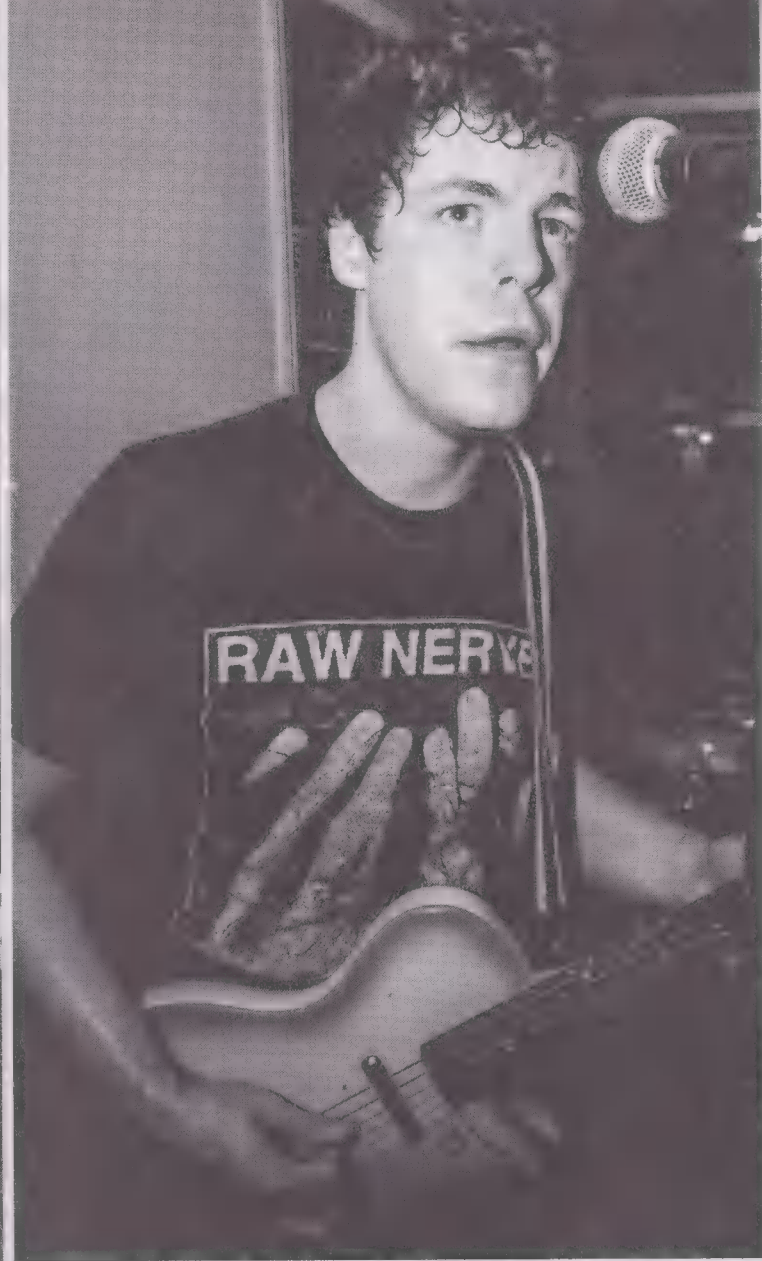
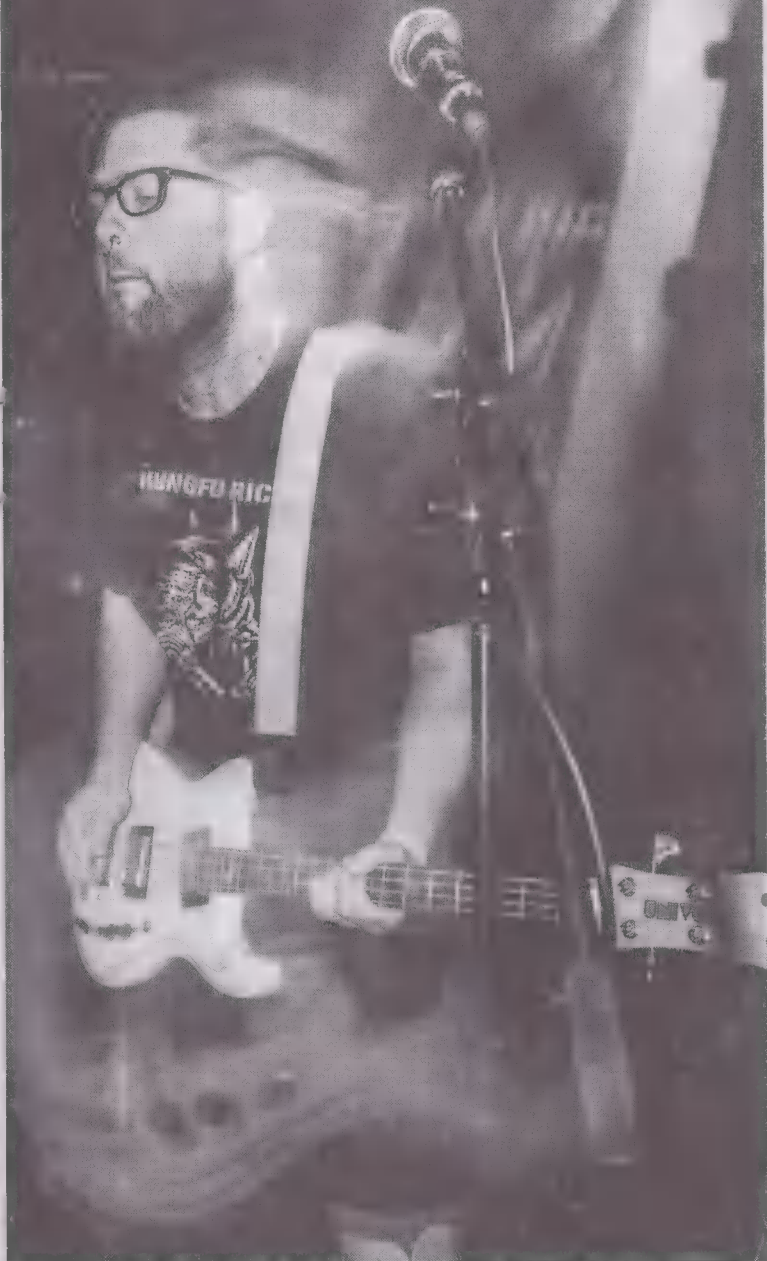
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Joey: I think he has it. I mean I haven't talked to him in two years, so...

Kris: Well, either way, that's his area of life. They played a show at my house in which at one point he said, "Eating meat is for faggots," and then after that song said, "I'm sorry I got really emotional."

Joey: Which should've been when I quit the band.

Kris: An adult who can't not say dumb things because of his emotions.

Shannon: I remember seeing something that that band had posted after all that went down, and saying something like, "We have chosen not to pursue ■ scorched earth approach..."

Joey: "Policy." Towards me. When we met up after the set, he was like, "I'm not going to go back to Chicago and spread a ton of rumors about you." And I was like, "Whatever, I'm

not either." And he says, "No, I know you! You will!" I don't need to; people know that he's a fucking idiot already.

Jim: And that's why Joey can't go to hardcore shows. Hasn't been to one since.

Joey: Yeah, I'm just fucking around with my shitty fucking pop punk bands.

Kris: Don't call me anymore!

Joey: I'm so satisfied with the bands I'm in now—Earth Girls and Broken Prayer—because I'm not in bands with terrible people. For a while, while Boilerman was going on, I was in terrible bands with terrible people. I was in two hardcore bands, and five people out of seven people from those two bands...

Jim: ...there was some overlap.

Joey: Have pretty much been exiled, ostracized out of Chicago hardcore for being pieces of shit. One for stealing a bunch of

shit from his friend he was staying with. Another for beating his girlfriend. Another for being racist/saying very insensitive stuff about someone who was sexually assaulted/smashing out the windows on a touring band's vehicle because they told him that he couldn't come into the show. Another for being a shitty philosophy professor, and one for just being kind of a sketchball.

Jim: That's it, that's why Joey can't go to shows.

Joey: I'm much happier.

Shannon: I think that's a good note to end on. Any parting words?

Kris: I'm excited to listen to the new Korn record.

THE L.A. ZINE FEST

AN INTERVIEW WITH BIANCA AND SIMON.
KENZO AND RHEA ARE ALSO CO-ORGANIZERS

INTERVIEW BY TODD TAYLOR AND DARYL GUSSIN

TRANSCRIPTION BY JUSTIN GEORGE
PHOTOS BY TODD TAYLOR AND ANDY GARCIA
LAYOUT BY LAUREN MEASURE

Los Angeles currently scares me a in a way I never thought it would.

For instance, the last several years have seen the rise of a lot of local breweries. I can't say I'm a fan of a single one. Record stores are popping up everywhere, yet my faith only lies in a handful. "Indie" culture is on the rise, but it feels so superficial—more for cash than autonomy. That's why an event like L.A. Zine Fest is so refreshing and real!

L.A. Zine Fest is a much-needed, much-appreciated convergence of independent projects and people, for Los Angeles residents and visitors. It's a community-driven, not-for-profit experience that showcases the overlooked and under-appreciated: the zinesters, the independent publishers, the freaks, and the weirdos. It astonishes me how many people I've met and maintained a relationship with—our mutual roots all go back to this annual event.

Todd: Bianca, you were a Fulbright scholar?

Bianca: Oh my god [laughs]...

Todd: [reading research] "...in 2006 teaching English in South Korea and she was born and raised in the suburbs of Los Angeles."

Bianca: Fact!

Todd: "...and her first zine was in 2009/2010... Simon was born and raised in and around Central Los Angeles. She is a graduate of the Otis College of Art and Design's illustration program with a focus on highly detailed art-folk portraiture. She is named after a drug cartel and started the Church of Simontology. Creepy Coven..."

Simon: Creepy Coven! I have a feeling that part of that... wait... what? How do you know about Creepy Coven?

Todd: Internet.

Bianca: That's some James Lipton shit.

Simon: He's very good at Google. This is some James Lipton shit!

Bianca: We're inside the "Zinester's Studio."

Todd: I can't bang rocks together, but I can use the internet when I have to go down the wormhole.

Bianca: What's my credit score? I know you found that!

Todd: That costs money. [laughs]

Daryl: I'm going to say it's pretty good. [laughs]

Bianca: Thank you. [to Simon] Do you have credit?

Simon: This isn't about me.

Todd: We're going to start off first with a real basic question. Why zines?

Simon: Hmm... basic but not easy.

Todd: Nice.

Simon: Bianca?

Bianca: Thanks for turning it over, Simon.

Putting *Razorcake* together can feel like a solitary act. A lotta basement time. And the people we do interact with are typically other people involved—or soon to be involved—with the zine. Being able to spend six hours behind a table, talking to people about what we do is an undeniable rush. There's nothing else like it the entire year for us. It runs the gamut of responses from the ecstatic to the indifferent, from the supportive to the, well... unsupportive. It's all there! And I love every minute of it.

If someone tells me they don't like *Razorcake*, I totally understand. It's not for everyone. That's by design. But if you tell me you don't like L.A. Zine Fest, then I'm speechless, because L.A. Zine Fest truly is for everyone. Acceptance is unavoidable.

Much respect to all the organizers—past and present—who've put so much hard work into such an inspiring project. —Daryl

I have lots to say about this. Why *not* zines? [laughter]. I believe *that* is the question!

Todd: So you guys are so multidisciplinary. You are multifaceted and multit talented ladies. Why pick the format of zines to do a zine fest? Why that other than anything else? There are so many things...

Simon: Why choose zines to make a fest out of, or why start doing zines?

Bianca: I think why choose zines to put our energy into?

Todd: Yes.

Simon: Because a zine is probably the least amount of energy. [laughter]

Todd: Oh so they're easy and anybody can do it?

Simon: They're easy... maybe they're not easy but they're definitely cheap.

Daryl: They're possible.

Simon: Possible, as I said before it's not rocket science. It's a couple of Xeroxes and a staple... or two because you gotta staple your goddamn zines.

Bianca: Please staple your zines. This is a public service announcement.

Simon: That's one of the reasons I chose this format, because it's accessible and cheap to produce and reproduce.

Bianca: I think people say that anyone can do it like that's a bad thing, you know?

Todd: But not everybody does it. They *could* do it...

Bianca: [putting on a voice] "Anyone can do a zine. Why should I read this zine? Nobody's paid to make it!"

Simon: [laughs] That's not true.

Bianca: But people are like, "I guess you couldn't get a publishing deal, so you made the zine."

Simon: But that is not the point!

Bianca: But that's what—apparently—makes something valuable, you know? I think we've told this story a couple of times and people always remember it different than I do... We were always pretty drunk in the early days. [laughs] I started doing zines because my best friend was doing a zine with a bunch of people and they were going to go to Comic-Con to present and I thought I would contribute to that. This was before I did my own zine.

Todd: The indie-press section of Comic-Con?

Bianca: There was a small press section. It was very depressing. I've heard it's worse now. It was kinda overflowing with Klingons, people who didn't really care what you were doing. No one wanted to look.

Todd: "Hey is the restroom here?" [laughter]

Simon: To be fair, you didn't even have a 3D dome experience. [laughter]

Todd: So you dressed up as airline attendants to go...

Bianca: Have you heard this story before or did you find the picture?

Todd: Found it!

Bianca: Oh my god! Those outfits were my favorite thing! We were all coordinated. We had orange outfits, little stewardess outfits...

Simon: You could even say you cosplayed.

Bianca: You could say that!

Todd: Into zines!

Bianca: Into zines! [laughs] We went and had a good time. It was cool. I didn't do another zine for six years. It was a positive memory, you know? I met so many cool people from other parts of the country who were publishing their own stuff—who were proud enough of what they made to go to this place where they were destined to be humiliated [laughter] and stand at a table for hours without anyone else but other tablers talking to them. This must be something that is very important.

So when I made a zine again, it was because I wanted to be a writer and I never copped to it, and I was really afraid to try and get a job as a writer or join the school paper. I was like, "This is something that I can do that I'm physically in charge of everything and no one tells me 'this is good' or 'this is bad' and I get to control everything," which is great as I'm kinda a control freak. I liked it as it was very laborious. There was a lot of editing that went through it. I got to spend a lot of purposeful time alone [laughs]. I liked that. I went to the San Francisco Zine Fest and I presented it. Everyone was *so* nice and fun. I got a really good response, and I don't think it was just because I had candy on my table, but I think it helped!

Daryl: What was the candy?

Bianca: I had a really good mix! I had the Dum-Dums, I had Snickers, Red Hots. I thought, "Here are all these people who are fearlessly standing in front of their wares, open to criticism and compliments. This must be something special."

Todd: So, Simon, why zines in particular? Jen Witte (Feminist Library On Wheels) said

something that I thought was really awesome about zines: "It smells like something." I never thought of that. My thing is that I don't need another machine to read the zine. The zine stands up by itself. It's tactile.

Simon: This is true.

Bianca: The tactility of it is important. I think when people asked us right when we started to get zine fests together, a lot of people were like, "What's a zine?" or "Why do you need a zine if you have a blog?" that kind of thing. I think the tactility of it is really important because it's literally something you can hold on to.

Todd: Let's not kid ourselves. It's not *just* about zines though. I'm quoting... "Zines make me feel like I'm a member of a secret group of people throughout the country who care about what they're making enough to see it through from beginning to end, regardless whether or not they make a zine again."

Todd: That quote was from Bianca.

Bianca: I must have had a couple of drinks [laughter]

Simon: I didn't immediately get into zines. I was making little one-off books with my friends and we would...we had this little club that was open to anyone. There were times where it seemed like a lot to do but it was also really fun. A lot of people that I know work well under pressure and a lot my favorite books I've made have been made in three to four hours.

So it was this club called "A Book A Week." It started in college and after I graduated, we just took it to different parks or museums or wherever the fuck around L.A. and we would read our books to each other and we would videotape them. We would hang out and draw and we started on a very

small scale mass producing these books and selling them and trading them. So that's how I got into zines. I was a pretty late bloomer.

Todd: That was another thing I was going to say: commitment. There's a commitment to zines. Also with zines is they're not—which I like about them a lot—they're not traceable to how far they go from hand to hand to hand. My favorite example is if a zine is on top of the toilet, you've got at least ten readers for that zine, you know? [laughter]

Bianca: That makes me never want to touch a bathroom publication! [laughter]

Todd: I'm going to quote Rhea who is another zine coordinator.

Bianca: She's here in spirit.

Todd: She's here in spirit and she said that the community supporting zine culture is as important to her as the actual zine itself. So I think this is where the L.A. Zine Fest comes in... so I'm thinking it was super easy to pull off, right? [laughs]

Bianca: [joking] It was soooooo easy! And it continues to be easy every single year!

Simon: You'd be surprised. All we had to do was just—the tables were already there, everyone knew where to go and what to do...

Todd: The internet blogged everything.

Bianca: None of us wept in the elevator space [laughter]. None of us dry heaved [laughter]. No toilet paper was needed that wasn't there, there was no blood, it was flawless... no panic attacks. [laughter]

Simon: My parents were proud. [laughter]

Bianca: Yeah, proud parents!

Simon: [laughs] That was a lie!

Bianca: Simon was joking. "We were pretty drunk in the early days." Obviously, there was drinking but I think we were drunk on the idea of just finding each other. We

definitely fell together. It was definitely fate locking us together and, in my mind, like one person met the other person and it started this chain reaction...

Simon: And one of us already knew the other one really well and it was like, "How do you know...her?"

Bianca: Yeah, "...we're working together on this thing."

Daryl: Do you want to talk about who these people are at all...?

Bianca: No! [laughs] Rhea is one of the organizers...

Simon: Founders...

Bianca: ...Co-founders. Meredith, who is no longer with us...she's alive [laughter] but she just doesn't organize this zine fest anymore.

Simon: She's gone to a better place. In fact she's gone to a worse place. [laughter]

Bianca: She's gone to a far worse place! Sorry Meredith but the Bay can [deepens voice] suck iiiit! [laughter] ...All I have against the Bay Area is that it took away my sweet, sweet Meredith. Otherwise, it's an a-okay place. So she's not in Los Angeles anymore.

Todd: What do you have against Green Bay? [laughter]

Bianca: Cheeseheads suck! [laughter]

Simon: So it was myself, Bianca, Rhea, Meredith and Eryca. I forget the timeline...

The way it happened was that my friend J.T. and I who were doing this A Book A Week stuff we were also doing a bunch of random things here and there at the Meltdown Gallery and Meltdown Comics. Before Nerdist got crazy and took over, he would regularly have art shows there twice a year—they were all with his students—so that's how we would do stuff at Meltdown and then Meredith had a fairly popular zine distro and she was



PHOTO BY TITILE HAWKINS

**BIANCA:
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doing a really tiny, teeny tiny version of the zine fest out of Meltdown. It was called "Supermarket." She would have a bunch of different vendors there and I believe that's where she met Rhea.

Todd: That's Team Falsestart?

Bianca: Her distro was called Falsestart.

Simon: We were Team Falsestart.

Simon: So that's how Bianca met Rhea, and she and Rhea were talking about doing things together and here's where fate comes into play. J.T. and myself were already really good friends with Rhea. Rhea and her then-partner were part of A Book A Week. I saw those people at least once a week to just make weird shit together. So fate steps in again. The first time... so I met Meredith at Supermarket and I was like, "Oh yeah, there's my new neighbor putting on that weird thing at Meltdown." Meredith had just moved into my apartment; we shared walls. So she approaches me and was like "Do you know Rhea?" and I was like, "How do you know Rhea? I know Rhea, but how do you know Rhea?" Then Bianca happened too, somewhere.

Bianca: I was in there, I was in the mix. I actually met Meredith. Meredith was tabling at Unique L.A. with Falsestart Distro and she had her display. I came up and I was talking to her and I think we were kinda joking cause it's super crafty in Unique L.A. and there's artisanal chocolate and ■ Captain Morgan team running around giving people shots of spiced rum...

Todd: [laughs] Artisanal...

Simon: Artisanal pirate rum. That's going to be Zine Fest in 2030...

Bianca: And we were just kind of rapping

and I tend to get... [laughter] ...I was just doing a Run DMC tribute [laughter]

Todd: [laughs] Beatboxing.

Bianca: ...and we knew that it was meant to be. We were talking it out and one of us said something like, "Oh man, that's so crazy that you're here at Unique L.A. but there's no zine fest. "You're the only person here selling zines or any printed material. Really? How come? Why?"

Simon: Why weren't you selling knitted beer cozies or berets?

Bianca: It was like, "Sacramento has a zine fest. Why doesn't L.A. have ■ zine fest?!" That's how I met Meredith, just talking shit on the fact that L.A. didn't have ■ zine fest.

Simon: So Meredith got together with Rhea and Bianca and we got together because Meltdown had asked Meredith to put on a monthly "something." That was kind of how either Meredith pitched it to them or they pitched it to us, but they wanted her to—as Falsestart—put on something. We would get the gallery once a month to do ■ workshop or some sort of art show. So we were all super excited and I think we got to do one event. [laughs]

Bianca: [laughs] Yeah we did one, but it was really good though! It was sooo good.

Simon: I bring it back to Nerdist, which might be the reason L.A. Zine Fest exists. Every time we would schedule something at Meltdown, they would email us and say, "Sorry. Nerdist is using it that day. Email this girl and she will reschedule you." And every time we would reschedule, we would get bumped.

Bianca: We also often got bumped by the Dungeons and Dragons group [laughter]. I

still hold a grudge... I'm still holding it tight! So after being pushed around long enough, we had that conversation: "Why isn't there a zine fest in L.A.?" I think we were talking about San Francisco Zine Fest and how cool it is. Portland and Chicago—they're just really good and really established zine fests. Fuck, why doesn't L.A. have one? It had been ten years since L.A. had any major zine event.

So that's how we had gone from where we were working together as a group trying to do things that were related to DIY and art. From there, we looked at L.A. and us not having a zine fest and said, "Fuck it, we can do it." So our first year was a series of surprising... I don't know how to word this?

Simon: Surprising successes?

Bianca: There you go! There were some very surprising successes because there were a lot of things that fell into place that was almost, maybe, luck and circumstance.

Todd: Such as?

Simon: I'd like to briefly interject that Eryca Sender at some point moved from Chicago to Los Angeles and Meredith knew her through zine fests and stuff and Chicago has ■ zine festival. It's great. I've never been, but I've seen pictures and that's kinda like going [laughter]—I've been on YouTube ■ couple of times [laughter]—and Eryca came and she was super pumped. She had been involved over there and she said, "I think we can do this. It's going to be easy." [laughter] "All we have to do is get sponsored by the university and it's going to work. It's going to flow so smooth," and I think we just needed someone to say that even though we knew that it was a lie! We just needed someone to jump in first.

Bianca: So Eryca joined us after we had

already started looking for a venue. We had already decided that we were going to put on *the* L.A. Zine Fest. We had made our Facebook group, so it was official. [laughter] I think our first big surprising success was getting a venue.

Todd: It's where you worked, Bianca.

Bianca: I did after. I actually got a job from Zine Fest.

Todd: So The Last Bookstore (a Los Angeles bookstore). We can say their name.

Simon: They were awesome, by the way, and continued to be super awesome and supportive.

Todd: Were they surprised at the turnout?

Bianca: Yes, I think everybody but Henry Rollins was surprised. [laughter]

when they were over in a smaller space on Main Street and I knew that they had moved to this *huge* freakin' space.

Bianca: It's an old bank. They've got a vault. It's where the people eat their lunch...

Simon: They have several vaults.

Bianca: So we availed ourselves to Josh from The Last Bookstore and he met us once and said yes. He let us piggyback on his insurance, he let us use his security, he offered to host events on the ground floor of the bookstore. He was super nice in every way. He essentially gave us the venue for free. He was like an angel. If we had not found him, we would not have been able to have the zine fest that year. The space was so enormous that it bolstered everybody's

down, it was just really great.

Simon: Outside of planning, it was a very, very positive experience.

Todd: It was one event that I walked away with, "Wow! That was actually fun and people were nice." Those are two things people don't associate when it's free in Los Angeles.

Daryl: That was the first time I had ever seen that many people interested in what I was interested in in my entire life of mostly living in Los Angeles. It was crazy.

Simon: It was.

Todd: So let's go to number two at the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Center.

Simon: We forgot the part about Bianca writing emails to Henry Rollins.

Bianca: We don't have to talk about that. It's not important!

Simon: No one here cares about Black Flag, right? No one who's going to listen or read cares about Black Flag. [laughter]

Bianca: It's not really a great story.

Todd: Just condense it to make it funny.

Bianca: It's in its simplicity that it's amazing. I was charged with writing to Henry Rollins, so as is my thought process, I got super drunk on two dollar wine and I poured my heart out to Henry Rollins about the city and why he needed to come to the zine fest. It was like huge. It must have been—on a conservative side it was 1,200 words to Henry Rollins. He wrote me back "If Vale is in, so am I." [laughter] That was to set the tone of every communication I would have with Henry Rollins. I would write him this huge thing about you know, "We're going have parking here for you. We need you here at this time. Do you need anything?" "No. Good to go. -Henry"

Simon: What I like about his first email to us he was like, "If you don't have Vale, you don't have me." That's how he ended it. That also set the tone. [laughs]

Todd: Wow. "Here are my boundaries?"

Simon: Yeah.

Bianca: I don't even need fifteen words [laughter]. I can tell you what I want right now!

Simon: All you needed to say was Henry, Vale, Los Angeles bookstore, February.

Todd: Let's just tell everyone that V.Vale is the publisher of Re/Search.

Simon: He's incredible.

Bianca: Him and Henry are like...

Todd: Long time...

Bianca: Buddies. They have friendship bracelets [laughter]. They're really, really tight.

Simon: They have friendship necklaces. [laughs]

Bianca: They've been good friends for most of their life and Vale is probably the greatest, nicest person.

Simon: He's so cool [sighs] and so smart and so excited.

Bianca: I don't know if you follow Re/Search publications or Vale on his social media, but he's constantly tweeting about cats and how great they are! [laughter] It's the best thing in the world. The man is an oracle.

Simon: Papa Vale [laughter]. So Zine Fest II.

Todd: At what point did the owners of the



Todd: "Oh, this is it?" [laughter]

Bianca: Henry Rollins shows up, fucking swollen—big muscles—and looking tough, thick neck just like "Hey! Where do you need me?!"

Simon: No, you go to his arms. There's physics at work Bianca.

Bianca: I can't even talk about that—it's warm in here [laughter]. It is.

Todd: So he said yes because of V Vale?

Bianca: So he approached us, we—okay [laughter] I—was in charge of getting Henry Rollins to...

Simon: Wait! I'm sorry. I was talking about The Last Bookstore. [laughter] We approached them. We approached them on our knees. I said, "Josh, you're a nice guy... I think." [laughter] "I don't know you super well but a little bit and if you can find it in your heart to help us with a venue?" He had moved. I used to go to The Last Bookstore

spirits. We felt so good about it that any kind of doubt that we had was erased...

Simon: At the time, we were overwhelmed by that size.

Bianca: We were like, "How are we going to fill this?" Oh, with two thousand really stinky people... who we love. [laughs]

Daryl: Sorry. [laughter]

Bianca: It was mostly me! Okay, I should say with 1,998 people and me sweating nervously.

Todd: It had narrow hallways.

Bianca: It's an old building! There's no modern air conditioning.

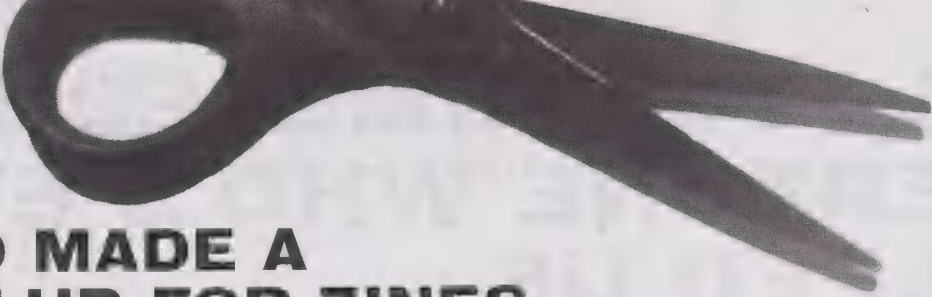
Simon: Plus everyone got wall space.

Daryl and Todd: That's true.

Bianca: Everyone got seen. Everybody was amazed at how many people were there...

Simon: Except Henry Rollins.

Bianca: Even though everybody was super sweaty and super tired at the end, everybody said thank you. People were helping tear



SIMON: WE HAD MADE A NIGHTCLUB FOR ZINES BASICALLY. OH, IT WAS BAD.

Ukrainian Cultural Center freak out that so many people were coming to look at zines?

Bianca: They were never freaked! They were always happy.

Daryl: Who was in charge of capacity?

Simon: Oh. So security is another thing that... so Meredith had a friend of hers, I think an old boyfriend who's really good friends with her. So we gave him a shirt, I sharpied "Security" on the back, and I gave him a clicker [laughter]. So it was his job to keep track of the people as they go in and out. An hour and a half into zine fest, he comes up to us and was like, "We need to close the doors. We're over capacity," and the second year was... awful [laughter]. It was awful because there's this constant stream of people, it's not even noon and you're telling them, "No, you can't come in. Line up outside the door."

Bianca: It's the hottest part of the day. People have come from all over the place.

Simon: We had made a nightclub for zines basically. Oh, it was bad. [laughs] It was stressful. The owners weren't freaking out, we were.

Bianca: The owners were totally fine!

Simon: He was like, "Look at this venue and success."

Bianca: He was so happy that so many people were there and we were cold sweating about the line...

Simon: His solution to our capacity problem was that he called someone that he had on security on speed dial. He showed up wearing a full security uniform.

Bianca: Pads and nightstick.

Simon: So, apparently, this new security guy's clicker was set to "just under capacity."

Bianca: Never goes over! [laughter]

Simon: And didn't actually work. Actually, Meredith's dad was doing a really good job at being the bouncer.

Bianca: He was great, as he's a dad! Everybody's like, "Alright, alright. It's a dad, it's a dad."

Todd: Kinda an authority but not dickish.

Bianca: He's got a tattoo, so...

Simon: Vendors were going in and out, but sometimes they would have an extra friend who was helping with the table or someone who was sharing tables with them, so we were like, "Okay, you guys can come." Meanwhile the doors closed, line around the block, and there's a little kid who comes in who's with a tabler and he (Meredith's dad) was, "Who are you?! Who's your parents?!" [laughter]

Daryl: So concerned.

Simon: "What table number are they at?!"

Bianca: He was amazing, so good. We've had so much help. People have just stepped in. Simon's mom always buys Subway for all the volunteers.

Todd: Aww.

Bianca: People's parents come and help. People's friends are like, "Dude, have you had a break?! I'll watch this info table while you go pee."

Simon: Since our first year, it's been phenomenal how many people so quickly and so adamantly offered to help in any way they can, for as long as they can. They never really asked for anything in return. It's always been that we'll always find a lot of people who want to help us not go crazy [laughter]. I don't think they know that—that they're helping. They want to help. I'm never going to not be surprised by that. It's... I'm humbled by everyone who's ever helped us.

Bianca: Yeah.

Todd: It's really because you're so friendly. [laughter]

Bianca: It's 'cause we're drunk all the time!

Todd: No, seriously, because even when things were—I knew things were tense with you—it was still a super fun time for both people going to it, and when they were inside the room, the vendors, people were very nice to us.

Daryl: I don't think I'd ever be able to tell

that there was anything bad going on from you two during the zine fest. [laughter]

Simon: Sweet!

Daryl: At the end when you're like, "I'm going to sleep for a week," [laughter] and I'm like, "But we just had so much fun. What are you talking about?"

Todd: Alright, third one?

Simon: Oh, the third zine fair. [laughs]

Bianca: I wish Rhea was here! The third zine fest was...every year we do a different venue.

Todd: Is that intentional?

Simon: Nooo...

Bianca: I think it is, I think it is.

Simon: It's not really because... not really.

Bianca: We had said from the beginning that it would be cool if we had—because we're L.A. Zine Fest, L.A. is huge. We can't have it at one place all the time. That said, it's no coincidence that we've never been asked to return. It's not that we've been kicked out. The Last Bookstore would have loved to have us back but they filled second-floor space with books and retail. Ukrainian Cultural Center—we don't want to pay that much money again to pay for that venue.

Simon: It was a lot of money.

Bianca: And Helms Bakery, they are doing construction that was supposed to be finished in time for zine fest and it's not. So we were invited back but that invitation was rescinded because the construction made it impossible



IT'S... I'M HUMBLLED BY EVERYONE WHO'S EVER HELPED US.



BY TODD TAYLOR

for us to occupy that same space and there really isn't another place for us to go. It's kind of like...

Simon: I just want one year in the same space, just one.

Bianca: [laughs] It would have been so great to have it in the same place as it's huge. We would be aware of the challenges of the space and we would be able, for the first time ever, to anticipate the challenges and fix things so those challenges don't appear this time. But we did not get a chance to do that.

Simon: So the third year comes. The second year, I had vocalized, "This is going to probably continue to be hard because the first year was really lucky to fall into place." So we had the obstacle of differentiating the things that were lucky from the things that were...

Bianca: From the things we caused [laughs]. What was luck and what was the result of both our work and thought and planning?

Simon: What are good ways to plan L.A. Zine Fest from the things that were, "Okay, they worked the first time because we didn't know any better." It just so happened...

Todd: I think that's called learning. [laughs]
Simon: The second year was a lot of learning.

Bianca: So much learning!

Simon: The third year was still difficult in its own ways...

Bianca: We had a lot of problems with permits. We hadn't had an issue with permits before. Getting to Day 1 for almost everyone was hard, but then on the day it was [laughs] only hard for Rhea. Because Rhea had volunteered to do all the event coordination and it was—it had kind of fallen on her to make the event space where there would be panels and speakers...um hospitable. We were having the speakers on the other side of a pull-down door where there was a DJ and tablers and attendees. She was trying to create a projection screen where there wasn't one. There was a lot of Friday/Saturday before zine fest working late nights and the day-of there was a lot of troubleshooting for Rhea. For everyone else, I think we had a freakishly smooth day. There were several times during the day where I was like, "I don't feel nervous, I don't want to go into a small room and cry while breathing quickly [laughs]. This is very weird!"

Simon: I ate. [laughter]

Bianca: I ate! I had a sandwich and a cookie. It was very strange! [laughter]

Simon: It was like everything was so unusually smooth this last year for us...

Bianca: Except for Rhea.

Simon: Yeah, except for Rhea.

Bianca: Kenzo was also really great at coordinating volunteers. Sending people to

where they needed to be. I know he was very busy as well.

Simon: Oh yeah! Kenzo is now an organizer.

Bianca: We got a new organizer.

Simon: He joined us our second year as a volunteer and he had a bigger role. He was the greater volunteer coordinator...

Bianca: For the third fest.

Simon: Which helped us out a lot, so this last year he was a full organizer. Also taking on the duties of being in charge of what needs to happen with the volunteers and where they needed to go, which is huge. He did a great job.

Bianca: We had so many volunteers again, it was really awesome.

Simon: They all got T-shirts.

Bianca: We had some as young as fourteen.

Simon: That was so cute to see. [laughter]

Todd: What is not a zine that someone has tried to convince you that it is a zine?

Simon: A T-shirt. Beer koozies [laughter]

Todd: [laughs] Because you had to put the foot down on...

Simon: Our first year, again, we didn't know a whole lot of what we were doing. People are applying. We said yes as they came in. Our second year we said, "Paper goods. You need to have paper goods..."

Todd: So, for L.A. Zine Fest has a zinester tried to block another zinester?

Bianca: What do you mean? Like in love? [laughter] Like a cock block? [laughter] I don't know about that, Todd!

Todd: No. "If they're going to show up, I'm not going to show up and all my friends aren't going to show up."

Simon: No we haven't had that.

Bianca: Fuck that.

Todd: Just wondering.

Bianca: We just hope that most people will be grown-ass adults.

Simon: There are a lot of people who do have very militant classifications with what a zine is and it has caused drama, but not with us.

Todd: I also wanted to thank you publicly for not being zine cops.

Simon: You're welcome!

Bianca: We had said the first year. We were like, "I don't want to be the DIY police." [laughter] That's not for me to do. I don't feel confident in that.

Simon: Because I'm pretty sure amongst us all we all have different ideas of what should be there and what we want to see there.



BIANCA AND SIMON, PHOTO BY TODD TAYLOR

Todd: It's part of the actual, real dialogue of people talking about it back and forth. I think that's really important—human beings sharing tangible objects. That really trumps a lot of this psychological internet, digital stuff.

Simon: There was this one guy—and to this day I still don't know if it was a joke or not—but he applied with his blog under the pretext that he was going to show up with flyers for his blog. What he called an e-zine, which is technically an e-zine.

Daryl: Wait, I think I know this person.

Todd: [laughs] Was he joking?

Daryl: Yeah.

Simon: When we said no... was he joking?

Daryl: His e-zine is like a big joke on zines.

Simon: Because when we said no he went on a few rants about how...

Bianca: I remember this!

Simon: You remember that guy?

Bianca: I always thought he was an internet crazy. [laughter]

Simon: And he probably was, but I couldn't tell.

Bianca: Good on you, fellow!

Simon: You got me!

Daryl: So Metro (the Los Angeles public transport system) is actually a sponsor of L.A. Zine Fest?

Simon and Bianca: Sorta, yeah.

Daryl: I'm curious as to how they are a sponsor and how that actually came about too?

Bianca: We wrote them a very nice email, per usual.

Todd: A long one.

Bianca: Again!

Simon: A drunken email. [laughs]

Bianca: So, from the very beginning, we have tried to get money anywhere and everywhere we could because we don't have a lot of money and we have expenses.

Simon: No one gets paid.

Bianca: We have to get port-a-potties. You

know these are necessary?

Todd: Sanitation? What are you talking about?

Bianca: So we had been writing to Metro for a long time, playing up the angle of it: "Hey, we really encourage people to take public transit and we consciously choose places that are easy to access via public transit." The expo line with the last zine fest, Vermont/Santa Monica station with the second zine fest.

Simon: Last Bookstore.

Bianca: Downtown is the convergence of so many bus lines. So we've always tried to play this angle. Last year, we finally came through when they decided to get in touch with us after our third attempt to get them to sponsor us. They said, "What we'll do is we'll feature you in our destinations booklet."

Simon: I have no idea what that is...

Bianca: They have that flyer in the trains that says, "Go Metro to this place." We missed the deadline [laughs] for being included in the booklet because we were too slow, but we're on their website with a calendar.

Simon: "Destination booklet" sounds like something Heaven's Gate gave its members. [laughter]

Bianca: You don't drink any Kool-Aid to claim this discount. What happened was they said, "We're going to include you in our 'Go Metro to this place' website section."

Daryl: Destination TV.

Bianca: If you give people something when they show you their Metro card. So we partnered with Tiny Splendor and they had this great zine they had made. They had previously made a zine that was how to make a zine, but it actually kind of oriented towards different levels of zines already. There were suggestions for people who didn't know what a zine was at all...

Daryl: I also feel like mass transit and zines have a long, unspoken history...

Bianca: Absolutely.

Daryl: And so when I noticed that Metro

logo on the website I was like, "It happened. They're on to us!" [laughter]

Bianca: Yeah! I made a zine about people I met on the train. People have done zines about interviews with bus drivers. There's so much that's connecting.

Daryl: *Constant Rider*.

Simon: It's been a long time since I found a zine on a bus or the subway.

Daryl: This one may be a little tricky. How do you feel that L.A. Zine Fest is different from other zine fests you've been to?

Bianca: That's not tricky at all, man! [laughter]

Simon: First and foremost, it all started with Hank. Good ole' Hank! Henry Rollins. If it wasn't for him being our co-keynote speaker our first year, most of the people who know about us wouldn't ever have known about us. That weekend, there were probably a lot of people who showed up because they knew...

Todd: Black Flag.

Simon: [laughs] Yeah, they knew Black Flag was playing a show.

Bianca: They knew Black Flag was reuniting to play. V.Vale was going to sing! [laughter]

Simon: They just knew he was going to be somewhere. They knew where it was but didn't know what it was.

Todd: It was free, during the day. [laughs]

Simon: It was free and that's why they showed up. Maybe they knew about zines but they had no idea for a zine fest. So if it wasn't for him, we probably wouldn't have been able to have as big of an audience as we have now. Which is kind of the reason I think that a lot of people are willing to partner or sponsor us, because we do have a larger-than-normal reach for being a zine fest.

I would say that L.A. is not unique from other zine fests; I would say that every zine fest has its own personality. I haven't visited every zine fest that we advertise. I

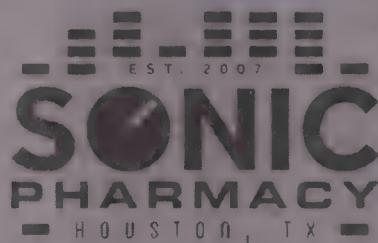
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know there's one in Albuquerque, I know there's one in Chicago, I know there's one in Portland.

Simon: There's one in Scranton, there's one in New Orleans.

Todd: Milwaukee.

Bianca: They're all over! It's so great and I wish I had the money to travel according to zine fests.

Daryl: Do you think there's something important about going to other zine fests?

Bianca: Yes! I think it's really vital to your planning experience to learn how other people do it. To get ideas to share. I think it's also important to talk to other organizers.

Simon: If you only wait for people to come to your zine fest, you're never going to get a chance to hang out with them because you're organizing the zine fest that's going on. So when I've gone to Portland—and it was awesome—I didn't do a goddamn thing beside sit there [laughs]. It was so nice, not having to worry about anything but show up.

Bianca: I think it's also really important because organizers understand things about zines fests that only other organizers can understand. As far as I know, none of the zine fest organizers in the U.S. are getting paid. Everybody's a volunteer.

Daryl: So Bianca, I hear you're a fan of the fermented horse milk? [laughter]

Bianca: Who told you about that?!

Simon: Daryl Lipton.

Bianca: I wouldn't say that I'm a fan. I would say that I drank it and I found it pleasing [laughter]. I have not sought it out since! Technically, it's fermented mare's milk. It's from a special kind of horse, I think? [laughter]. It's kind of a, "You had to be there" kind of thing.

Todd: Where were you?

Bianca: I was in Mongolia. [laughter]

Daryl: Did you exchange watermelons for this fermented horse milk? [laughter]

Bianca: Who have you been talking to?! Oh wow! My mom doesn't even know this story! My mom doesn't even care about this story! My mom is like, "Oh, that's nice."

Simon: Your mom just knew she was out of watermelons. [laughter]

Bianca: After I'd finished teaching in South Korea, my really good friend Dana and I took a trip. We took the Trans-Siberian railroad but we didn't take it to Siberia. We took the other leg that goes through Russia. So we started in China, we went up to Mongolia, we went through Russia. [laughs] When you cross the border from China into Mongolia, you are sharing the train with a lot of people who are maybe smuggling things into Mongolia. Things like watermelons and vodka and sausages [laughter]. They hide them in your luggage and in your shoes, without asking, because they don't speak English and you don't speak Mongolian. So there's just a hopeful look in their eyes. They're making eye contact as they're smiling and nodding and putting a sausage into your backpack. [laughs] And that's not a euphemism at all! It's actually what's happening. [laughter]



So we were in this train car and me and my friend Dana were sleeping on bunk beds. We had this Mongolian trader and he was sitting across from us and he was smiling and then customs came and they checked all our passports. He was very nervous and then customs left and they gave us our passports back and he started pulling things out of everywhere in the car, including watermelons and he kept opening thermoses. In all of these thermoses that he had was a lot of fermented mare's milk and he was trading it with people for other sausages, trading it with people for fruits and vegetables, and he drank some of it with us and then we drank it later again.

Todd: What did it smell like?

Bianca: It kind of just smelled like yogurt. It kind of looked like non-fat milk but it was a little bubbly, it was kind of good. In Korea, they have a fermented rice drink called Makkoli, and it basically tastes like carbonated milk. It's kind of good, so having come off drinking a lot of that, it was fine. [laughter] Very low alcohol. I would suggest it to give you a nice steady buzz in your yurt in the winter. [laughter]

Todd: Daryl's brother used to live in a yurt. [laughter]

Bianca: I love yurts! I love them. Was it in Mongolia?

Daryl: No, it was in Vermont. [laughter]

Bianca: That's cool, it's cold there.

Daryl: What do you do after the fest?

Simon: Sleep, bath, Epsom salts.

Bianca: It's very anticlimactic. You're like, "Is it done? Am I done? No, we can't be done."

Simon: We'll go around in circles just like, "So it's done. Everyone has returned everything that we've rented." And it just ends with an, "Okayyy, so I guess I'll just go."

Bianca: There's like hugs and then goodbye and we're all, "I'll call you." [laughter] This most recent fest, I had gotten a new job in

December, and my boss was like, "Hey, I don't usually do this, but I'm going to be taking the day off after February 16. You should be fine." So I was like, "Cool, so you're going to be gone for the first time ever and I'm going to be in charge for the first time ever, right after the L.A. Zine Fest [laughter]. So I woke up at like 6:30 AM and I... started working. And by 7:30 AM, I was weeping. I was just weeping [laughter]."

We had reserved an Airbnb two blocks away from Helms for the next day so I could stay there and work. So I was weeping in the room, typing on my computer because you can't not be productive. You have to work, so I'm just weeping through the work and then my boyfriend was like, "Bianca, we have to leave the Airbnb," and I was like, [upset voice] "Okay." So I went to the Surfas restaurant where everybody bought coffee the day of the zine fest. I was sitting on their patio, eating soup, weeping, just using their wi-fi. I just cried all day.

Simon: I went home and I got tacos. [laughter]

Bianca: Goddamn you, Simon. Goddamn you to hell. Everybody has their own decompression routines.

Simon: My boyfriend and I got tacos and then we watched a movie or maybe we fell asleep eating. [laughter] The next day—my feet felt like they had been punching bags the day before.


Bianca: Yeah, your feet hurt.

Simon: It just hurts to walk and your legs are probably really sore, too. So I didn't really do much. Maybe got more tacos but that's it. [laughter]

Bianca: [laughs] Fell asleep eating again?

Simon: As you would. Everyone has their own ritual.





One Punk's Guide to Bike Touring

By John Miskelly

I cycle, but I am not a cyclist.



Photos: Alex Daymond-King and John Miskelly
Layout: Becky Bennett

John Miskelly

The humble bicycle is merely an elaborate set of mechanisms designed to carry the operator from point A to B for most folks.

In modern punk circles, it's more than just a set of tubes, chains, and rubbery bits: it's a venerated sub-cultural icon in its own right. Bikes are everywhere in punk—in lyrics, in zines, on tattoos, chained in ramshackle disarray outside venues and basements and coffee shops and bars and any other sub-cultural assembly point you might think of. What the private jet is to vulgar rock superstardom the bike is to the punk, but in reverse; not ■ status symbol, but a *lack-of-status* symbol, a physical manifestation of an ethic that rejects conventional expectations of how real grown-up people are supposed to live and embraces a new way—greener, cheaper, healthier. Punks love bikes like Murdoch hates facts.

It's no wonder that members of our globally dispersed community have sought to further consummate this relationship between punk and bikes by riding not just to and from their local boozer, but very, very far indeed; across states, countries and continents. Usually it's the freakishly motivated types; the ones already looking towards their Master's degree when you were still basking in the glory of even graduating high school, or starting labels when you could still barely tune your bass. Maybe it's your partner, or bandmate, or your local co-op coffee shop barista who rode the length of the African continent on a brakeless fixed gear bamboo bike they made themselves, with just one pair of underwear, a sleeping bag they made from upcycled flannel shirts, and survived only on food gifted to them by the people of the villages they passed through.

I am not that person. I cycle, but I am not ■ cyclist. I am a twenty-eight-year-old of slight physique and fairly rude health, but I play no sports and am certainly no adventurer. I like Netflix and records and reading. I get conscious of my legs aching while standing up during a boring band's set. I'm vegetarian, but not vegan because I'm not that committed to anything and lack conviction. My trip was carried out on a whim conceived and nurtured by ■ far more pragmatic and motivated friend. Alex was my enabler. He had a large amount of time on his hands and was going on a bike tour.

"Fuck man, you should come."

"No thanks, that sounds difficult and uncomfortable and hard."

"But you've no commitments and you hate your job and, anyway, it's a temp contract. And you're always going on about leaving town. It might be a bit hard but it might also be fun and life affirming."

I went on a bike tour basically by accident, because it's summer and you've got to do something in summer, right? France, Belgium, a bit more France, a bit more Belgium, back to France, left at Strasbourg, Eastwards to Munich: six hundred odd miles in fifteen days. Is that fast? Is that far? I don't know. I don't care. I did it. I learned some stuff. Here it is.

What Is a Bike Tour?

This is almost wholly subjective. For some it's a race, a challenge; ■ matter of pounding away the miles as quickly as their lycra-clad legs can propel their carbon fiber frames. We met a couple of these people and they are, for the most part, extremely boring and tedious to talk to—nerdy, obsessive dorks disguised in the bodies of athletes. For others—and I think most punks would fall into this category due to the relative lack of conventional ambition it projects—the bike tour is a whimsy, meandering soirée between a series of either pre-planned or spontaneously discovered points of interest. What's a point of interest? Potentially anything: a pub, ■ café, an historical landmark,

a gig, some wildlife, the point at which you lose interest in finding points of interest and either pitch camp or go home. But it should feel like a trip, an adventure, and it should cover at least two or three nights. And you should ache at least *a bit* the next morning. Whatever your definition is, though, make sure it's in a similar ballpark to that of your riding buddy. Don't let unforeseen "artistic differences" sour the touring experience.

Finding Time

This is trickier for you careerist types with your annual salaries and responsibilities and measly three weeks of annual leave, especially if you want to do a heftier distance that can't be squeezed into a weekend or bank holiday. Likewise people with spawn; I guess you should have dropped out of life like the rest of us. Cycling is an inexact science. The weather, mechanical or bodily failure, and a host of other variables could set you back hours, so predicting an exact arrival time or even day can be tricky. Plus you'll probably want a couple of days rest immediately afterwards. If you're running way behind schedule, but are determined to make your end point, make a mental list of excuses to feed to your boss should you need to steal ■ couple more days of leave.

Of course, for all the whining and moaning we might indulge in, most of us *do* have time—loads of it in fact—that we spend doing either nothing at all or something that eventually amounts to something less than nothing. Catch yourself before you fall into that oldest and stalest of self-deceptions: "I just don't have time." It's as boring and played out as a *Lord of the Rings* internet meme.

Get Your Shit Together

When researching a kit, you'll probably hear a lot of romantic bullshit and self-aggrandizing Kerouacian spiel about how all you need for a bike tour is something vaguely resembling a bike, something almost recognizable as a sleeping bag, and, if you can squeeze it into the Wall Mart carrier bag that you've substituted for a pannier, possibly ■ decent tin opener. In a literal sense, this is true. It can and has been done, and if that truly is the best you can afford, I suppose ■ bike tour full of abject misery and emotionally crippling tedium might be better than no tour at all. If, on the other hand, you're a normal human with a limited patience for sitting around duck-taping a derailleur back together for the fifth time that morning, then you're going to have to invest some time and money in kit gathering.

Get a bike that fits your body size with two decent brakes, some gears, and an adjustable seat post, and then acquire both the skills and tools to adjust/repair all of them. Some people don't think you need gears on a touring bike, but I found them very useful in dealing with upward gradients and preserving the use of my knee ligaments. Why are you taking your cues from a guy with no lenses in his glasses and a moustache he stole off an 18th century German tobaccoist anyway? Leave the fixie hipsterdom in the city where it belongs and get some gears. Take said tools with you along with two spare inner tubes. Learn how to change an inner tube and how to fix a puncture. Tools for more substantial maintenance jobs should only be bought on very remote rides or in poorly developed countries: is your bottom bracket really liable to explode in the time between first feeling that slight tickle of play and the next bike shop? Probably not, and you should have checked that it was tight before you left anyway.

Get a pannier rack and some panniers. Ask yourself how many T-shirts you need and then half that number. During our fifteen day ride, I wore two "riding" shirts and two none-riding shirts for evening excursions into civil society. I wore one pair of light, breathable shorts for pretty much the whole trip and bought one pair of jeans for cooler evenings. I wore three pairs of boxers and three pairs of socks, which I washed only once and I'm not ashamed. The weight of your panniers is limited only by your squeamishness and consideration for those you might meet along the way. Ensure that your riding buddy has a similar crust tolerance as yourself; is his limit "pop punk band's van on sixth day of European tour," or full-on "cider swilling gutter punk with battle jacket held together by grime and *Exploited* patches"? Establish this before departure.

Consider the climate (aka “the weather”). I bought a waterproof jacket and wish I’d bought waterproof panniers. If you don’t have waterproof panniers, put all your shit in a trash bag and put the trash bag inside your panniers. I learned this too late. Consider your pannier purchases carefully. Not everything over twenty bucks is a shameless corporate ploy to extract money from suckers for cheap, worthless shit. Some things are pricier than others because they work better, and don’t—without warning—jump off your pannier rack and into your spokes where they tear themselves apart like wet toilet paper.

Eat, Hydrate, Ride, Repeat

Over our fifteen days, we averaged a daily distance of 75km (around 46 miles), riding probably about six or seven hours a day. I have no idea if this is good or bad going, but I do know my appetite tripled over that period. We ate *a lot*. If you’re in ■ foreign country, take this as an opportunity to stuff your face with all kinds of interesting deliciousness and caffeinated beverages. If you stop for a snack and can’t decide between sweet or savory: fuck it; eat them both. You’ll burn off those calories eventually. This is all dependent on budget and diet of course (veganism obviously takes some work in a strange town, but it can be maintained in most of Western Europe. I rode with a vegan and he had no problems consistently outpacing me up every hill.) Buy sugary comfort foods that can be stored on your bike or about your person and then forget about them, then joyfully remember them again midway up an epic forty-minute climb through ■ shade-less, sun-scorched wheat field in the middle of nowhere: sweet, revitalizing dark chocolatey goodness.

For lunch we usually stopped for an hour or two, popped into ■ food store, and bought the materials for some truly titanic-sized sandwiches, which we constructed and ate on a park bench. While buying lunch, get some fresh veg and a tin of protein (beans, lentils, etc.) that can be mixed into a packet of Uncle Ben’s instant rice, the kind you usually put in the microwave for a couple of minutes, for a hearty evening meal. We couldn’t fit a microwave into our panniers, but we did have a little meth cooker made from an old beer can (look it up on the internet) which worked brilliantly well. Remember to leave excess room in your panniers for food storage. Bring a sharp knife/penknife for chopping shit up.

Take note of and stock up before public holidays and any day when shops might be shut. In France and Germany, for instance, nearly all shops are closed on Sundays. In fact, quite ■ lot of France seemed shut for quite a lot of the time. In a way, it’s awesome and probably part of the reason they don’t kill themselves or each other at quite the same rate Brits and Yanks do, but it can also make subsisting on a meal-by-meal basis quite tricky.

Even if there’s only a dozen or so kilometers between you and the next town, you never know what might stop you making the distance, so always have at least a morsel of food on you at all times.

In terms of water: I had two bottle cages on my bike (aka Blue Chunder) containing a regular-sized bike bottle in one and a 1.5 liter plastic bottle in the other, the kind they sell soft drinks in. These can be squashed down to fit quite snugly in a normal sized drinks cage. Ask friendly bar and café staff to fill them up with tap water whenever you can.

If by chance you accidentally ride through the hottest three hours of a very hot day, a sachet of electrolyte powder dissolved in a cup of water can be an absolute life saver, possibly even literally. You can buy them cheap at drug stores.

Accommodation

We camped every night and it was mostly awesome. Personally, I’d always choose a cramped tent over a hostel dorm room infested with beer swigging, Abercrombie and Fitch-wearing Australian student jocks trying to out drink, out muscle, and out grunt each other until four in the morning. Our only real decision was whether to “wild” camp for free or pick out a real camping site. Wild camping is satisfying, punker, and makes for a more authentic experience, but in countries where it’s not legal, there remains that ever-present kernel

of irrationality at the back of one’s mind that you might be busted and moved on. Logic dictates, of course, that the chance of a normal person spotting a solitary tent in their local woods and actually giving enough of ■ fuck to even approach it, let alone have you turfed off your spot, is slim to none at all. But the thought remains stubbornly there nonetheless. Campsites, meanwhile, have showers, toilets, often boozers, and sometimes even whole towns attached to them. Also, searching for a concealed wild camping spot after a full day’s riding can be a tiresome and stressful bore. If you really want to stick it to the man (aka nice old French chap who runs the reasonably priced camp site in question) it’s really easy to steal a night’s camping at those places. But, then again, you’re not a fifteen-year-kid with a mohawk and ■ Crass T-shirt and some very confused ideas about what constitutes anarchy, so whatever.

Route

Just because it’s the quickest route on the map, doesn’t mean it’s at all pleasurable to ride. Unless you like the sensation of a semi truck thundering past three inches from your elbow while you pedal through the tumult like a baby turtle floundering through ■ beach break, I’d suggest staying off the highways and main roads. Check the map the night before, choose your roads, plan a route, and be prepared to adapt to unforeseen road blocks, non-existent or un-rideable bike paths, and various other annoyances. If you can get a map with contour lines, you can avoid demoralizing, energy-sapping hills. Remember: roads that follow railway lines or rivers tend to be flat(er). Try not to ride through busy city centers if you can. They mostly consist of waiting at red lights and getting lost. (I suck at all navigation as a general rule.) My buddy Alex used the Maps With Me mobile app which did us fine. The maps are detailed and can be viewed offline. You just need to download particular areas before you leave. For cell phones though, you need electrificational power. Alex had some kind of black magic dynamo hub to juice his battery, but if you can’t shell out for one of these, or, like me, are too easily flustered by such sorcery, bring a paper map just in case. Come to think of it, bring one anyway. Cell phones have a tendency to fly out of bags and smash, or fly out of bags into the innocent hands of people who then make no effort to return them.

Reading

Bring two books. Swap ‘em with your buddy when you’re done. Kindles can fuck right off.

Aches and Pains

These are pretty much unavoidable, but can be lessened and managed simply by knowing what is and isn’t the correct way to set up your bike. First of all, get your saddle position right, at a height so that at the lowest point of your peddle stroke your legs are slightly bent but *not* locked out. Get some handlebars that allow you to place your hands in a variety of positions, so you can move your upper body about a bit and aren’t fixed into one position. Drop bars are good for this as long as you don’t ride fully bent forward at the lowest point for too long.

There’s loads of stuff on the internet about riding position and bike set up. Check it out, but don’t obsess. Saddle pain will persist, but will lessen in intensity after a couple of days. Don’t be tempted to just buy the softest saddle you can find. It won’t necessarily equate to ■ more comfortable ride. I found that muscle pains came in fifteen minute increments; my upper thigh would twinge for a while, then my knee, then nothing for a while, then my thigh, then another part of my other knee. Small changes in the position of your feet on the pedals can help with these pains. Occasionally, I applied menthol rub to my muscles, but don’t know how much it did or didn’t help. It sure does smell nice though, and it’s tingly! The first twenty minutes of every morning sucks. Just push through it. Don’t play the hero and try and ride through serious and persistent pain. It’s not worth it. If you’re fucked, you’re fucked. Sorry. Just accept it, stop, and live to thrash another day.

Essentials

- Bike
- Pannier rack
- Panniers
- Tent
- Sleeping bag
- Roll mat
- Allen key set
- Two inner tubes
- Hand pump
- Adjustable spanner (wrench)
- Puncture repair kit (with tire levers)
- Maps
- Compass
- Food
- Water
- Time
- Lungs
- Legs
- Heart

Attitude

A happy-go-lucky “ah, shucks” approach to hardship and fatigue is unbearable, but so is a hair-trigger tempered neuroticism. Somewhere between the two is a harmonious level of stoic realism. For the sake of your companion’s sanity and will to live: find it, or risk waking up in the middle of the night with their hands round your throat. No one wants to die in a sleeping bag.

It’s incredible how quickly and painlessly a hill can pass when you’re thinking about something completely different. The hard bit is trying not to think about not thinking about it, because by thinking about not thinking about it you will inevitably think about it. So just don’t think at all.

Don’t obsess over mileage. For one thing, unless you have a little on board distance-ometer whatchamacallit it’s hard to measure. Also, you risk becoming a boring person to be around à la the aforementioned carbon fiber lycra dorks.

Ignore Everything You Just Read

The above is not a set of instructions, but advice based on my own experiences. We are all three dimensional unique snowflakes of differing needs and desires and what works for me might suck for you. In the end, the only way to find out what suits you is to go ahead and do it.

For advice, inspiration, and how to tour on a budget check out tomsbiketrip.com

For inspiration and an insight into what kind of distances are actually possible on a bike, read Alistair Humphreys’ account of his four-year round-the-world bike tour in *Mood of Future Joys*.

John Miskelly lives in Bristol, England, where he divides his time between standing at the back of shows like a tired dad and watching *The Thick of It* on repeat for eternity. He writes bi-monthly short stories for razorcake.org and an irregular blog at protagonistcomplex.blogspot.com. He is almost completely without purpose or direction but takes pride in the knowledge that he has never in his life set foot in an Ikea.



*What the private jet is to
vulgar rock superstardom
the bike is to the punk,
but in reverse.*


All photos on this page: Alex Daymond-King



PEEPL E WATCHIN'



GARY BONETTI



People Watchin' from Boston, Mass. fosters a special connection only their brand of pop punk can elicit. A sense of dejection loom over lyrics that are sometimes angry, sometimes sad, and yet always full of heart. They're couched in raw, melodic guitar riffs that get stuck in your head for days. These songs are personal as fuck; Sadie Smith leaves the sugarcoating in the gutter and tells you straight up about not feeling at home in her body, the painful ache of drunken loneliness, about growing but not growing up. Poppy and gritty, this band is the iconoclastic force that is much needed around here. They let their true-queer-freak flags fly and create a precious berth around them that invites people to fly their own. This band is important.

This interview took place in Portland, Ore. in our living room the morning after the show. We sat on mattresses on the floor that they slept on, surrounded by amps, speakers, drums, beer cans—all the remnants of an amazing show. This show was one of the most exciting and provocative ones I had seen in a while. All show-goers rocked out, respectful of each other and the house. No one said anything dumb or offensive. My housemates got on the mic and spoke their feelings in-between songs and were received with loving kindness. All the bands ruled. People of varying ages and genders and backgrounds all came together in this highly positive and energized space. It reminded me why punk is the best.

Interview and Photos by **Danielle Kordani and Gary Bonetti**
Layout by **Eric Baskauskas**

Sadie—guitar and vocals

Mambo—vocals, bass, and occasional tambourine

Jake—drums

Vicky—guitar and vocals

Danielle: How do you describe your band?

Sadie: I would say we are queer punk that is poppy.

Mambo: That's pretty accurate.

Sadie: Region, rock-influenced punk.

Mambo: Twang.

Sadie: Gay country. [laughs]

Danielle: Give us your origin story. How and when did you form?

Jake: Mambo dropped a fish bowl down the sewer and found some mutant ooze.

Danielle: Kinda like *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*?

Jake: Maybe.

Danielle: When did you start?

Jake: Sadie called me when I was mowing my grandmother's lawn, and I didn't know her really. I mean, sorta. I had only been playing drums for a little while and she was like, "Do you wanna play in this band?" and I was like, "What instrument?" "Drums, obviously."

Danielle: What year was this?

Jake: 2011 maybe.

Mambo: Me and Sadie's old bands used to play together and stuff, so we toured and knew each other for a long time. So we were like, "Oh let's do this weird drunk side project

with whiskey and drink Bud Light Limes all day and record things."

Sadie: That's how we bonded, with Bud Light Limes, 'cause Jake was also just getting into Bud Light Lime and then we bonded.

Mambo: Whiskey. [laughs]

Danielle: What's the history of your name?

Jake: Sadie was like, "It's gonna be People Watchin' but with two E's!"

Sadie: I was hanging out with Vacation and they have a song called "People Watching" and I thought that would be a good band name, but I'll just change it.

Danielle: So they'll never know.

Sadie: So they'll never know, yes.

Jake: We were originally called the Goo Goo Dolls but then we found there was another band with that name. [laughs]

Danielle: So, the big question—you're currently on tour with the objective of moving yourselves to Olympia. Is everyone moving? What is attractive to you about Olympia?

Vicky: That's a loaded question! [long pause]

Mambo: I'm not moving to Olympia. I still have stuff to wrap up in Boston; you know like our friend group...

Sadie: Gotta wrap 'em up! [laughs]

Jake: Wrap 'em up and ship 'em out here!

Mambo: It's really cool on this tour to escort four of my really close loved ones across the country 'cause I've done that move alone and it's really scary and dumb, but I met these people on that move and it's cool to be a part of that process and finish up stuff out there and come back.

Danielle: Are you planning on moving to Olympia eventually?

Mambo: Probably not Olympia, maybe even here (Portland, Ore).

Sadie: Look out!

Mambo: Yeah, here or Seattle. Probably not the Bay Area again.

Jake: Mambo is from the West Coast and the rest of us are all from Boston and none of us have ever moved anywhere.

Danielle: Big change.

Jake: I don't know, only speaking for myself, Olympia wasn't like this big thing of, "I am gonna move there." It was more like, "I need to move out of Boston." We decided to move to Olympia really casually while we were on tour. We were like, "That would be cool!" and then we just went with it like a year later.

Danielle: Is there anything specifically attractive about Olympia that you're excited for?

Vicky: No mutant bros.

Sadie: [laughs] No mutant bros!

Jake: There are probably some mutant bros.

Sadie: It's cheap and there are way more queer people in the punk scene; it's more integrated than Boston. There are more trans women—it seems like—in the Northwest, in general.

Jake: It's just different than Boston, in general. That's what attracts me to it.

Gary: What is it like being a queer pop punk band in a city that is saturated with a history of militant hardcore? As a band, do you feel at home in that scene or will a move to the West Coast be a better fit for your desires and ideals as musicians and punks?

Sadie: Boston is definitely a hardcore town. No one really likes pop punk there. I think between Parasol and People Watchin', we kind of helped start a more pop-oriented scene. There definitely wasn't a queer scene there three years ago, I don't think as much. But, also I think people in hardcore bands love to talk shit on pop punk being sexist and misogynist, which a lot of it is. But it's hardcore! Most of it is really fucked up. I think just assuming that based on genre something is fucked up without paying attention to the lyrics and the people is kinda—whatever.

Jake: I feel like it's weird 'cause there is this element where it's cool to be in a city where it's kinda like you're doing something that pushes the limits a little more...

Sadie: [laughs] Something that is completely ignored?

Jake: Yeah. I don't think that's true at all. I mean, I feel like Boston has made a ton of headway in terms of a queer scene developing and it's been really cool but really tiring 'cause it's like battling a tide.

It's always a thing where—are we going to live somewhere where everything's already good or be somewhere where we try to make things better? Both things are cool, I guess. We did that a lot in Boston already and I feel really good about stuff that happened in Boston. Boston is exhausting.

Mambo: It's exhausting. It's really taxing.

Danielle: Are there people in Boston who are going to continue that work strongly?

Jake: Definitely.

Danielle: I guess that brings me to another question of what other projects are you in? Are they going to continue? Is this band going to continue?

Sadie: Well, we just recorded a ten-song LP. It's called *Gutter Flower*. Once it gets mixed, we're going to put it out and try to tour off it at some point. So we're definitely going to keep being a band. We're just not doing anything for like six months.

Jake: We have two splits coming out, too. With HIRS and with Babe Quest.

Danielle: Babe Quest! Really? I love that band!

Gary: Are there other bands you are in—other ones that you are going to be sad to leave behind?

Vicky: We are all leaving behind some projects, or putting them on hiatus. But, me and Jake are in Parasol and Josh, who is also moving with us, is in Parasol. We're hoping Mambo moves out. We're hoping Lily moves out. We love that band and don't want it to stop being a band. There are some bands left behind or put on hiatus. I totally doubt we'll ever tour.

Jake: Vicky played in the band Fleabite, also Discipline, which is definitely one of those bands that will keep carrying the queer torch in Boston.

Jake: I play in a band called Rash Tongue. It's a hardcore band that will hopefully do something in the winter. We might tour with this band called Leather Daddy. We're recording another record.

Sadie: I was in Baja Blatz!

Jake: Yeeaaaah!

Danielle: I just got your tape.

Mambo: Luckily. Max Ono, who plays drums in Brave Hands, which is my other project—just moved to Portland. Hopefully, touring in the winter and maybe moving out here.

Jake: A big ol' Mambo move!

Gary: You mentioned y'all are having a split with HIRS. What do you have to say about that? How did y'all get together?

Sadie: I'm super excited about it because I think it's cool to do a cross-genre split that is more based on our identities and our politics than what the music sounds like. I feel like with pop punk—well now I'm just talking shit about pop punk—a lot of it is apolitical and bro bands that are like, "Yeah, let's like uh do a split."

Mambo: Like most music, though.

Sadie: How did we meet? Oh yeah, we just played a show with HIRS in Philly and

Jenna (from HIRS) was super cool and said "We should do a split together!" We were like "Yeah!" and it came together super awesome. We have two songs and they have eight songs or something. [laughs] They are all fifteen seconds.

Jake: I first met Jenna when a band I used to play in called Nervous Condition was playing a zine fest in western Mass. that HIRS also played. There is a Nervous Condition cover on the HIRS split. It's really funny. It was a surprise.

Sadie: Jenna is a super inspiring person; she is just very in your face and super queer. It's cool to have a split with another trans woman. I feel like there are not a lot of those.

Mambo: Scott (member of HIRS) is also a sweetie!

Sadie: And Scott! I love Scott!

Mambo: True freak, always remembered.

Danielle: You played Fed Up Fest this summer, right? That happened. Can you tell us about this festival? How are the politics important to you—personally or as a band?

Sadie: It was a super important weekend for me to be in a room with that many queer people and trans people playing and it was just a really intense moment. It felt really good to be there, especially after driving through the Midwest and being really anxious at gas stations. Like Vicky said, mutants everywhere. It was really emotional for me. To have a space like that is really rare. I hope they do it again.

Vicky: Their selection of workshops and speakers was awesome. I think that can really set the tone for fests. When you are bringing together all of these bands because of their politics and you have all these workshops that so many people attended and participated in, that was just great.

Jake: Yeah. There was a strong focus on anti-racism, which I felt was really awesome and sometimes doesn't necessarily happen at queer events. I feel like it was the best fest I have ever been to because I usually don't have fun at fests—even though I like them in theory. Usually I like all the bands and all the people and everything that is going on. I usually don't have fun.

Danielle: It's stressful.

Sadie: It was cool because they didn't overload it with bands. It just felt really good. Jake got MRSA on his fucking face.

Jake: I had MRSA on my face.

Danielle: Holy shit!

Jake: Mambo and Sadie spent all night with me in the emergency room.

Mambo: University of Chicago.

Jake: Then we all raged all day the next day.

Mambo: That was hand-downs one of the best, most important sets we've ever played.

Jake: Yeah.

Sadie: Yeah. I cried.

Mambo: I cried a little while we played.

Danielle: Would you feel comfortable talking about what it's like being a trans person on tour?

Sadie: Yeah, I would. Fed Up Fest was really cool because we toured with eight or nine people. It can definitely be nerve-wracking and stuff. Not because everyone doesn't have my back, but people aren't always around or it's like, "What bathroom am I going to use at this place?" We were at Del Taco and some woman was giving me a hard time about being in the woman's bathroom. I was just trying to shit in peace, ya' know? [laughs] There are a lot of situations where I just stay in the van. Also, I think it is really important to do, and go to the places where you don't know there are going to be a lot of queer people. It's really rewarding when people come up to you and say, "Thank you so much for being here." That makes it all worth it.

Jake: Especially when driving through corn fields for eight hours and you show up in a weird business park and you walk into this seemingly abandoned warehouse and it's an arts space full of queers.

Sadie: Kansas City!

Danielle: That's awesome. Speaking about the tour more, give us a nationwide snapshot. What bands were you stoked to play with? Do you feel like the gender balance in bands and attendance is shifting throughout the country or not?

Sadie: Philly is always second home to us. It's amazing.

Mambo: The Bay.

Sadie: Yeah, the Bay. Every Jenna Marx

(Crabapple and Joyride) band.

Mambo: Jenna Marx! Super star.

Sadie: Every band we played with on tour was awesome.

Jake: I feel like with the shifting balance stuff it's really hard to say. Are we just finding our niche better or are there really more queer bands and bands with women? I feel like there is at least more of that sort of thing happening. Punk scenes in general are becoming more integrated or is it just becoming available as its own thing? It feels like wherever we go there is more or less that sort of scene.

Danielle: Do you make an effort when you are booking a tour to request to play with bands with more queers?

Sadie: I think because we are an "out" band that people just kind of know. So that's cool.

Jake: People are like, "I can do that!" and then there's like one band with a woman.

Sadie: Yeah, it also depends on where we are, to a certain extent.

Danielle: Would you rather drink a cup of your own blood or wear a waffle taped to your back that you had to butter and syrup every day for a year?

Jake: I'd drink a cup of my own blood.

Mambo: That sounds sick!

Danielle: You would probably throw up.

Sadie: Nourishing. Yeah, I would throw up every morning.

Mambo: Throwing up is ... life.

Sadie: The waffle would just fuck up snuggling.

Danielle: Or it would make it more interesting.

Mambo: For a year!

Jake: No way I would do something for a year when I could do something in five minutes.

Danielle: You could probably also tape it to your chest.

Jake: That wasn't in the original scenario.

Mambo: That's bullshit.

Vicky: Is it the same waffle the whole time?

Danielle: You can change it if it starts to get gross.

Mambo: I like the blood.

Jake: One personal assistant or a friend who knows they have to change your waffle every day.

Mambo: Do you have to eat it at the end of the year?

Danielle: If you want to. That's not a condition, though.

Mambo: I kind of want to eat the waffle.

Vicky: What if you just ate the waffle every day?

Jake: Nobody else is going answer the fucking question. [laughs]

Mambo: I said I would drink the blood!

Vicky: I said blood.

Mambo: We all said blood! Immediately!

Sadie: Uh, undecided.

Danielle: Are all-ages shows important to you? Why or why not?

DANIELLE KORDANI

JAKE:

I HAD MRSA ON MY FACE.

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SADIE: THE WAFFLE WOULD JUST FUCK UP SNUGGLING.

Mambo: Absolutely, I remember trying to sneak into shows when I was twelve or thirteen years old for bands I really cared about. Sneaking outside or breaking into a back door or jumping over a fence. Trying to get in and getting thrown the fuck out. My eighty-pound body! Having access to art or politics is so important. That's a big problem with Boston right now: the cracking down on house shows where a lot of younger people want to come. There is a big bar scene there and they just don't have access. On the flip side, a lot of those people will start opening their own homes to shows if they are able to. Without having that availability, a lot of bands come through having no idea where to go. They are like, "Oh we'll play this bar shit and people will just hang outside." It's hard. Access is so important.

Sadie: You can't really put addresses on fliers and stuff in Boston.

Danielle: The cops are pretty brutal about shutting down house shows.

Sadie: Yeah, totally.

Jake: To me it's most important when there is a touring band on the bill that you know people are going to come out for. If you think it's a band that kids in the suburbs will want to come and see, even kids from the city who are younger, that's when it takes on a lot of importance for me—especially thinking about being a kid when bands came through and I couldn't go.

Sadie: People are so focused on if its all-ages or not. People don't really think about how it might be exclusive in other ways. I definitely think all-ages are important but there is definitely something to be said for local, age-restricted shows that ... I would

rather always have shows that are all-ages but I don't think there is anything wrong with hanging out with your friends and drinking at the bar. But I think it's important to not lose sight of what it was like to be a kid.

Jake: It can be a slippery slope.

Danielle: Speaking of that, and being relatively adult—if you could travel back in time and communicate something to your sixteen-year-old self, what would it be?

Mambo: "Listen to more Rancid." [laughs] Maybe that's more like my fourteen-year-old self.

Jake: Such a good question.

Sadie: [whispers] "You are a girl." [laughs] Do you remember those shirts that say "Nobody Knows I'm a Lesbian"? You could get them at Newbury Comics. I really wanted that shirt. I didn't know why, but now I know. [laughs]

Vicky: I would be like, "Don't worry Vicky, in a couple of months you're going to meet Jake."

Everyone: Aww!

Jake: I would be like, "Don't worry Jake, in four years you are going to meet Vicky."

Danielle: What was your first concert?

Mambo: The Living End in Melbourne, Australia. That band was so good.

Sadie: ALL and Pennywise.

Vicky: It was probably Anti-Flag.

Jake: Mine was Modest Mouse and the Flaming Lips.

Danielle: Yours are way cooler than me. Mine was Korn at the Palladium in Worcester. It was with Mindless Self-Indulgence in 1999.

Mambo: So good.

Jake: Actually, I might have seen System Of A Down before that show.

Danielle: I think they still hold up.

Gary: Mine was Garth Brooks in the fifth grade.

Sadie: I love pop country.

Mambo: There was a lot of pop country on this tour.

Jake: We have become true freaks. True pop country freaks.

Danielle: Is there anything else you would like to tell the readers of *Razorcake*?

Sadie: [whispers] Can you ask us about our latest record? Don't write that.

Gary: So your most recent record is called ... *Dumpster Flower*? [laughs]

Jake: It's called *Gutter Flower*.

Jake: There is no other record called that.

Sadie: Don't look it up on the internet. You can figure it out. We trust the readers.

Danielle: Secret tracks?

Sadie: There is a secret track, yeah!

Mambo: Shhh!

Sadie: Shit, oops! I'm really proud of it. I think the songs are more cohesive, more diverse.

Gary: Is there a general theme to the lyrical content?

Sadie: You know, the same boring shit—dejection, alienation, queer misery. There are some more interesting songs. There is a song about being called out and trying not to be defensive and trying to grow that way.

Danielle: Is that from a personal experience of yours?

Sadie: Yeah. It's more experience stuff.

TOP FIVES

RAZORCAKE



Adam Bowers

- Pity Sex, *Feast of Love*
- Potty Mouth, *Hell Bent*
- Cloud Nothings, *Here and Nowhere Else*
- An Horse, *Rearrange Beds*
- Owen, *Other People's Songs*

Alex Barrett

1. Caves, *Leaving*
2. Ex-Cult, *Midnight Passenger*
3. Long Knife, *Meditations on Self Destruction*
4. Neighborhood Brats, *Recovery*
5. Sonic Avenues, *Mistakes*

Andy Garcia

1. Frau, *Punk Is My Boyfriend 7"*
2. Destruction Unit, live at Not Dead Yet Fest, Toronto, ON
3. S.H.I.T., *Feeding Time 7"*
4. Big Zit, *Electric Zit Vol. 1*
5. Depths Of Reality, *The Demo*

Art Ettinger

- M.D.C., *Millions of Dead Cops: Millennium Edition LP*
- Kepi Ghoulie, *Kepi Goes Country LP*
- Reducers SF, *Essentials 4 x LP*
- Apocalypse Meow / Todd Congelliere, split 7"
- Little Dave Merriman, *Odd Bird Cassette*

Bill Pinkel

- Black Rainbow, Self-titled
- Ty Segall, *Manipulator*
- Neighborhood Brats, *Recovery*
- Martha, *Courting Strong*
- I know I'm like way late to the party on this one, but Chance The Rapper, *Acid Rap*

Billy Kostka

1. Golden Pelicans, Self-titled
2. Gino And The Goons, *Shake It!*
3. Icky Boyfriends, *Live in San Francisco*
4. The Monsieus, Self-titled
5. Nots, *We Are Nots*

Cassie Sneider

- Top 5 Worst Songs to Hear on the Lite FM Station at Your Office Job*
1. "Live Like You Were Dying" by Tim McGraw

2. "Butterfly Kisses" by Bob Carlisle
3. "Wonderful Tonight" by Eric Clapton
4. "Angel" by Sarah McLachlan
5. "Ebony & Ivory" by Paul McCartney & Stevie Wonder

Chad Williams

- Top 5 from Rock The Ship: Pirates Press 10th Anniversary Weekend*
1. Secret Cock Sparrer set at midnight at Bottom Of The Hill
 2. Cock Sparrer literally playing on the streets of San Francisco
 3. Smalltown at 1 PM!
 4. Reducers SF back in action!
 5. Giants winning World Series Game 4 during Cock Sparrer. Take 'em All!

Chris Mason

1. Martha, *Courting Strong LP*
2. Total Control, *Typical System LP*
3. Ex Hex, *Rips LP*
4. Protomartyr, *Under Color of Official Right LP*
5. Radiator Hospital, *Torch Song LP*

Chris Terry

1. Run The Jewels, *RTJ2 LP*
2. FKA Twigs, *LP1 LP*
3. *Confessions of a Teenage Jesus Jerk* by Tony Dushane (novel)
4. My short story "At Home with Rapper's Delight" on TheNewYork.com
5. Felix Lynn Terry, 9 lbs. 7 oz., October 7, 2014

Craven Rock

1. Ferguson Uprising and all resistance in support.
2. Seattle anti-police brutality protestors shutting down Westlake Center Mall on Black Friday resisting Darren Wilson verdict and continued presence in the streets almost daily.
3. Gina Siciliano's release of *I Know What I Am* and the release event where she read her essay about it.
4. Bob Mould at Neptune Theater (Thanks Kayla Greet!)
5. Seeing Simon Henneman's Meridian Big Band premier at The Josephine and then Mike Watt at the Tractor.

Dave Williams

- Top Ten Records of 2014 Not-So-Sneakily Masquerading As a Top Five*
1. Martha, *Courting Strong / Märvel, Hadal Zone Express* (tie)
 2. At The Gates, *At War with Reality / Needles/Pins, Shamebirds* (tie)
 3. Cold World, *How the Gods Chill / Taylor Swift, 1989* (tie)
 4. Pallbearer, *Foundations of Burden / Onyx, Wakedafucup* (tie)
 5. Bane, *Don't Wait Up / The Raging Nathans, Losing It* (tie)

Designated Dale

1. Molotov at the Regent in DTLA, never a bad show with these guys. *Ever*.
2. Ripping through a Ramones set with homies Art, Kyle, and Mike (AKA Charm Like Bricks) at the annual VLHS Halloween Show to a packed house, rain be damned.
3. Dangerhouse Records night at the Echoplex in Echo Park. Say what ya want about the other bands, but The Deadbeats stole the fuckin' show.
4. These four fantabulous full-lengths that turn forty-five this year: MC5, *Back in the USA*, Black Sabbath, Self-titled, The Stooges, *Fun House*, and David Bowie, *The Man Who Sold the World*.
5. My mom's pumpkin pie recipe. It's simply the best that I've put away over the years and I ain't being biased one iota, shit you not.

Daryl Gussin

- The Brokedowns, *Life is a Breeze*
- Neighborhood Brats, *Recovery*
- Steppe People 7"
- Delay, live at The Wulf Den
- People all over the country taking their frustration to the streets. No justice, no peace.

Eric Baskauskas

- Fest 13 Top 5ish*
- Night Birds
 - Tie: Direct Hit! / 5 Star Pizza
 - Tie: Donovan Wolfington / Hard Girls
 - Direct Effect
 - Melvins

Evan Wolff

1. Swim Team
2. Bad Matches
3. Gazer
4. Leggy
5. Bummers Eve

George Rager

- Top 5 Recent Discogs Purchases*
- Lost Kids, *Bla Bla*
 - Elton Motello, *Victim of Time*
 - Soda Fraise, *Ça Baigne Dans L'Huile*
 - Jet Staxx, *French Girls*
 - Fehlfarben, *Monarchie und Alltag*

Indiana Laub

- Notches, Self-titled EP
- Glass Cake, *Lunar Caustic EP*
- Moto Surf, Self-titled EP
- Venkman, "Throw Rocks at Cats"
- Forrest Conifer, "Awkward Cult Forever"

Jamie Rotante

- Top 5 Band Name Ideas Inspired by Dinosaurs*
1. Beast Foot (Theropod)
 2. Swift Seize (Velociraptor)
 3. Terrible Claw (Deinonychus)
 4. Tidal Giant (Paralititan)
 5. Different Lizard (Allosaurus)

Javier Cabral

- Top 5 L.A. Pop Punk Shows of 2014*
1. New Found Glory at Santa Anita Racetrack
 2. Masked Intruder at Roxy
 3. Direct Hit! at the Redwood
 4. Teenage Bottlerocket at Warped Tour (Pomona)
 5. Modern Baseball / Wonder Years at Fox Theater

Jeff Proctor

- Top Shows to Kick off 2015*
1. Octagrape and Stalins Of Sound, Jan. 3 at the Redwood Bar, DTLA
 2. The Dictators and Angry Samoans, Jan. 16 at the Roxy, West Hollywood
 3. Paul Collins Beat, Jan. 23 at the Smell, DTLA
 4. Rocket From the Crypt, Jan. 31 at Alex's Bar, Long Beach
 5. Burgerama 4, Black Lips, Bleached, Witch, Shannon And The Clams, Audacity, Ty Segall, Gang Of Four, King Khan & BBQ Show, J. Mascis, Coathangers, Roky Erickson, March 28 and 29 at the Observatory, Santa Ana

Jennifer Federico

- Top 5 Traveling Bands*
- Warsaw: bus from Belgrade to Zagreb (winter)
 - Echo & The Bunnymen: bus from Gothenburg to Oslo (winter)
 - Sonic Youth: train from Fukuoka to Nagasaki (autumn)

Top 5
Band Name Ideas
Inspired by Dinosaurs

- Mark Lanegan: train from Paris to Geneva (spring)
- IO//sé: subway from Oakland to San Francisco (whenever!)

Jim Joyce

1. Sheer Mag, "Hard Lovin'" from self-titled 7"
2. Jonas Canon's zine, *SRVIV* (compilation)
3. Eula Biss' book *On Immunity* in particular, the perseverance of indie bookstores in general
4. Winter months/tonsil hockey season
5. Brimstone Howl, *Blowhard Deluxe*

Jimmy Alvarado's

- Funky Four Plus One More*
- Deadbeats' set at the Frontier Records/Part Time Punks' "Dangerhouse Night" at the Echoplex
 - Pre-"Dangerhouse Night" grubbin' at El Tepeyac with the homie Designated Dale
 - *Part Time Punks Sampler #5* comp
 - Sin 34, *Do You Feel Safe?* reissue
 - *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* TV series. Yeah, I'm a geek.

Joe Dana

- Top 5 Releases of 2014 to Lil' ol' Me*
1. Against Me!, *Transgender Dysphoria Blues*
 2. Chromeo, *White Women*
 3. Fartbarf, *Dirty Power*
 4. Run The Jewels, *RTJ2*
 5. Neighborhood Brats, *Recovery*

John Mule

- Swingin' Utters songs That I Would Give a Thumb to Have Written...*
1. "No Eager Men"
 2. "A Promise to Distinction"
 3. "Angels Pissing on Your Head"
 4. "Pills & Smoke"
 5. "After Thoughts" (Filthy Thieving Bastards)

Juan Espinosa

- Big Crux, *Ponchito LP*
- Low Culture / Needles//Pins, split 7"
- The Repos, *Lost Nut* Cassette
- No Love, *Tape #2* Cassette, tie with Freak Vibe, *Prostration* Cassette
- The Dead Milkmen, *Big Lizard in My Back Yard* LP reissue

Kelley O'Death

1. Miss Lana Rebel, *All I Need*
2. Amigo The Devil, *Diggers*, *Manimals*, and *The Liars Club* single
3. The Mountain Goats, *Tallahassee*
4. Lucero, *Tennessee*
5. The Smart Brothers, Self-titled

Kevin Dunn

1. Sonic Avenues, *Mistakes LP*
2. Sugar Stems, *Only Come Out at Night LP*
3. Big Eyes / Post Teens, split 7"
4. Low Culture / Needles//Pins, split 7"

5. Jawbreaker, *24 Hour Revenge Therapy* LP reissue

Kurt Morris

1. The Beach Boys, *Pet Sounds*
2. Jesu (everything)
3. Misfits, *Collection I & II*
4. I Love You But I've Chosen Darkness, *Dust*
5. Minor Threat, *Complete Discography*

Mark Twistworthy

- Meatbodies, Self-titled LP
- Fugazi, *First Demo* LP
- Wet Lungs, *Vile Hobbies* EP
- Mixed Band Philanthropist, *The Impossible Humane* LP reissue
- Spank Rock, *The Upside* EP

Matt Average

- Brody's Militia, *Napalm Zeppelin* EP
- Zex, *Wanderlust* 7" single
- Larry Young, *Lawrence of Newark* LP
- Eric Dolphy, *Iron Man* LP
- Dystopia, *Human=Garbage* 2 x LP

Matt Werts

- Ivy, Self-titled
- Hot Tip, Demo
- Leonard Cohen, *Popular Problems*
- Belle & Sebastian, *The Boy with the Arab Strap*
- *Stepping Out*, zine by Jason Schulmerich

Michael T. Fournier

- Screaming Females, *Downtown* Boys, Pujol, Whore Paint at Spark City, Providence, RI 11/07/2014
- Survival Knife, *Hungry Ghost* at Great Scott, Allston, MA 11/20/2014
- *Sub Pop USA: The Subterranean Pop Music Anthology 1980-1988* by Bruce Pavitt
- Parkay Quartz, *Content Nausea* LP
- Trophy Wife, *All the Sides* LP

Mike Dumps

1. Ryan Adams, *1984* 7"EP
2. Ryan Adams, Self-titled LP
3. Stay Clean Jolene, Self-titled LP
4. Recess Records, *Cavalcade of Clowns Tour* 7"
5. Even Hand, *Drifted*

Mike Faloon

- My 5 Favorite Songs on the Minus 5's New 5 x LP, Scott the Hoople in the Dungeon of Horrors*
1. "Boyce & Hart"
 2. "Michael Nesmith"
 3. "Dead Irish Writers"
 4. "Remain in Lifeboat"
 5. "Hold Down the Fort"

Mike Frame

1. AC/DC, *Rock or Bust* CD
2. Haden Triplets, Self-titled CD
3. John Felice, entire catalog celebrated
4. The existence of Billy Joe Shaver
5. Black Hills Vinyl, Rapid City, SD (store)

Naked Rob

Radio Valencia 87.9FM SFCA

- Long Knife, *Possession* 7" (PDX hardcore punk)
- Psychic Teens, *Face/All* 7" (Philly post-punk shoegaze)
- Faking, *Vices* 7" (Philly noise rock)
- Movie Star Junkies, *Evil Moods* CD (Italian garage psych rock)
- The Shrine, *Waiting for the War* 12" (Venice Beach skate metal punk)

Nighthawk

Rad Stuff Happening in 2015

- Dudes Weekend
- My Two Moms reunion
- Working a new job
- Putting out records again
- Really learning to play bass

Paul J. Comeau

1. The Bad Doctors, *Burning City* LP
2. Möbius Strip, *Palabras Podridas* 7"EP
3. La Armada, *Crisis* 12"EP
4. Unwed, "Made Of" b/w "Pope" 7"
5. Leonard Cohen, *Popular Problems*

Paul Silver

1. Pears and The Atom Age at the Ken Club, San Diego
2. Great Apes, *Playland at the Beach* EP
3. Trumans Water, *Octagrape*, Permanent Makeup at the Casbah, San Diego
4. New Colonies, Self-titled EP
5. Entropy, *All Work, No Plagiarism* LP

Rev. Nerb

- Mother's Children, *Lemon* LP
- Various Artists, *Power Pop from the Garage* CD
- White Ass, Self-titled LP
- Boys [Australia], Self-titled CD
- Various Artists, *Charred Remains* 2 x LP

Rich Cocksedge

- My November Has Been Enhanced by the Following Items*
- *Filmage: The Story of Descendents/ALL* DVD
 - Wovenhand, *Refractory Obdurate* LP
 - Vicious Pleasures, Self-titled 7"
 - The No Marks, *Light of One* LP
 - Bleeding Rainbow, *Interrupt* LP

Sal Lucci

1. Ausmuteants, *Order of Operations* LP
2. Ausmuteants, *Fed Through a Tube* 7"
3. *The Humans* (comic book)
4. The Klitz, *Sounds of Memphis, '78* 7"
5. Buck Biloxi And The Fucks, *Culture Demanufacturer* LP

Sammy thrashLife

5. Phone sex on long drives
4. The Copyrights, *Report*
3. Returning to Florida

2. Tying up and peeing on my consenting partner

1. The Brokedowns, *Life is a Breeze*

Sean Arenas

- New Junk City, Self-titled LP
- Your Pest Band, *Time to Go* LP
- Touting Magazine, Self-titled 7"
- Sharkpact, *Run* LP
- Mallory Whitten, *Collected Poems & Stories*

Sean Koopenick

Best RSD/Black Friday Scores

1. Johnny Thunders, *Real Times* 10"EP
2. Joey Ramone, *Christmas Spirit...* 10"EP
3. Hüsker Dü, *Warehouse: Songs and Stories* 2 x LP
4. Joan Jett, *Recorded and Booked* 7" (plus book)
5. Sneakers, Self-titled 10"EP

Steve Hart

1. Graduating from the University Of Hawaii
2. Faith No More, "Motherfucker" single
3. Neil Hamburger on Oahu
4. Daniel Lanois, *Flesh and Machine* LP
5. Godflesh, *A World Lit Only by Fire* LP

Toby Tober

Top 5 Movies I Have Enjoyed Recently

1. *The Real Dirt on Farmer John*
2. *Bill Burr: I'm Sorry You Feel That Way*
3. *Kumaré*
4. *Electric Boogaloo: The Wild, Untold Story of Cannon Films*
5. *Alive Inside: A Story of Music and Memory*

Todd Taylor

- Neighborhood Brats, *Recovery* LP
- Big Crux, *Ponchito* LP
- Brokedowns, *Life Is a Breeze* LP
- Tie: Delay, live at The Wulf Den / Iron Chic, *The Constant One* LP
- Tie: *Still Lives / Dead Animals*, Simon Sotelo (zine) / *Problem? Solution*, Bianca (zine)

Tommy Vandervort

1. Brokedowns, *Life Is a Breeze* LP
2. Gateway District, *Partial Traces* EP
3. Shallow Cuts, *Stormwatch* EP
4. The Lillingtons, The Methadones, The Brokedowns, at The 10 Year Anniversary Party for Red Scare Records, The Metro, Chicago
5. Memorial for Bob Popp at Liars Club

Ty Stranglehold

Top 5 Bands of 2014

1. Radioactivity
2. Neighborhood Brats
3. Mind Spiders
4. Needles//Pins
5. Video



AARON & THE BURRS:

Release the Bats! 7"

Two snappy surf tunes, all major chord zippy and true to the genre. Considering the horror motif used in the artwork and song titles one would've expected a bit more of a somber tone to the proceedings, but they do what they do well. —Jimmy Alvarado (Feral Kid, feralkidrecords.com)

ACID BABY JESUS: Vegetable 7" EP

If Lenguas Largas huffed paint and looped Warhol's *Blood for Dracula*, Acid Baby Jesus from Athens, Greece would be their kaleidoscopic hallucinations. "Vegetable" is psychedelic garage rock, while "Brain Damage" is textural noise-scapes destined to upset your dog. These two songs would make a great soundtrack to your home haunt, but for those who prefer catchiness over atonality, Acid Baby Jesus is too abstract. Sadly, the record doesn't include an insert so I can't comment on the lyrics, but I have never been disturbed by cauliflower and baby tomatoes until I saw *Vegetable's* cover. That can't be achieved with words. —Sean Arenas (Slovenly, slovenly.com, label@slovenly.com)

ANGRY DEAD PIRATES, THE:

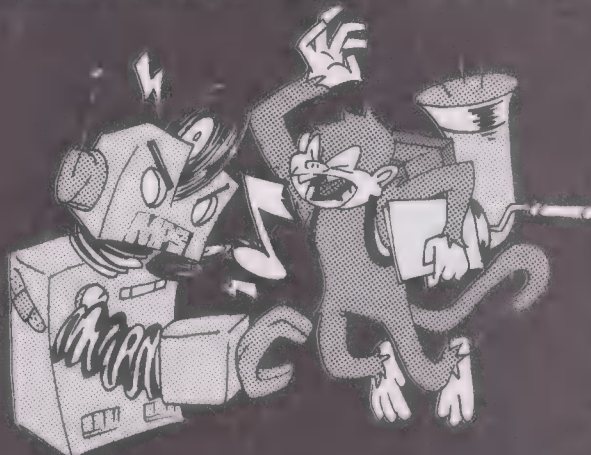
Garage Music for Mind and Body: LP

At this point, garage rock seems to be the premiere scene of rock music for the last decade or so. Sometimes, that's great. I love a good garage record, but it seems to translate to letting a lot of bands just sort of phone it in. Just enough slack in the vocals to make it sound like the singer doesn't care, just enough reverb in the guitar to make it sound like guitarist is always about to miss the notes, just enough simplicity in the drums to never confuse anyone where the song is going. It just gets rather uninspiring sometimes. Angry Dead Pirates at their best do what at least a hundred other bands do, but not in a way that raises your eyebrows. You simply see it, think, "Yeah, that sounds alright," and move on with your day. Interchangeable garage rock. Grade: C. —Bryan Static (Frantic City, franticcity.free.fr / Barbarella Club / Laboratoire)

ASYLUM: Self-titled: 7"

This is the type of band that could be on Profane Existence's roster if the songs were more politically minded. Don't get me wrong, this band has very intelligent lyrics and content, they just tend to lean on the human spirit for subject matter. The song "Shitshow" focuses on ridding yourself of apathetic behavior and taking assertive action or you'll, "endure a blind existence with a faint, tepid heart." This is what I'm

RECORD REVIEWS



"They're trying to build a divergent path off a band that built a divergent path."

—Jimmy Alvarado
Big Crux: Panchito: LP

talking about—the words are beautiful, and the strong message is there. Musically, they're angsty hardcore punk with a metal tinge. Fans of Nausea, Appalachian Terror Unit, and Skarp will enjoy. Good stuff. Seek it out. —Kayla Greet (Vinyl Conflict)

AUSMUTEANTS: Order of Operation: LP AUSMUTEANTS: Fed through a Tube: 7"

How does a band appear seemingly out of nowhere, being so young yet so fully formed? There are only a few I can think of in the past fifteen or so years (Reatards, Exploding Hearts, Davila 666, Horribly Wrong). Add to this list Australia's Ausmuteants. *Order of Operation* is their second LP and second this year (I'm not sure where to place their *Split Personalities* tape, which was recently pressed on LP). On top of two LPs this year, there's this *Total Punk 7"* and at least two other 7"s that I know of. Think Ramones-ish rhythms with synths. Themes are of everyday life: alienation, even from one's own friends ("Freedom of Information" and "Depersonalisation"); having to pretend you like someone's band just because they're nice. Some critics dub Ausmuteants as "dumb" but they really don't get it, and might just deserve to be stabbed with a pitchfork. Keep your eyes and ears on these kids! —Sal Lucci (Goner / Total Punk)

AWESOME AND THE ASSKICKERS: Quit Fucking with Our Crops! CD

I have never dropped acid, but I have now listened to *Awesome And The Ass Kickers*, a band of men in capes and luchador masks that sound like The Aquabats if they wrote an album's worth of material for Rancid. This album is fucking weird but it will be in my rotation for a while. I like the sound and the playfulness of the songs. There is a strange connection to Tombstone pizza—an entire song and the band doing an advertisement for the product in the liner notes—don't ask me what that's all about. Good music, anyway. —John Mule (Self-released)

BARRERACUDAS: "Promises, Promises" b/w "Young & Dumb": 7"

There's something indefinable about Barreracudas' ability to capture the early evening airiness of the sliver of '80s bands that did this kind of music well enough to remain relevant. I'm already a fan, and Barreracudas have not disappointed yet. They have a knack for this type of catchiness. Both songs are solid. Power pop-inspired rock'n'roll great for listening to while leaning on a wall. —Billups Allen (Oops Baby, oopsbabyrecords.com)

BASIC SKILL: REVIEW: Self-titled: 7" EP

Six-song platter from this band that hails from the rolling hills of Virginia. Obviously, they're fans of some of their former neighbors (like Scream), but these gentlemen bring more than their influences to the party. Melodic hardcore with vocals that rail against injustice makes for a potent combination. All of these players have paid their dues in the DC underground. The end result is fantastic. "Infinity" is the fresh horse out of the gate for me, but they all burn hard and fast. Do yourself a favor and grab this bad boy. Reston Hardcore=represent! —Sean Koepenick (Undercurrent, undercurrentrees@gmail.com)

BATS, THE: Demo 5:26:84: 12" EP

The Bats are the kind of band that gets forgotten easily. Even today, many great bands play shows and break up without recording, but that was even truer in the pre-digital era. Michael Chabon, best known for his novels including *Mysteries of Pittsburgh* and *Wonder Boys*, briefly fronted The Bats, a cool, very '80s-sounding band in the vein of the Meat Puppets. Two of the members of The Bats are currently in the stellar Pittsburgh act The Sicks. The download included with the vinyl also features a recording of the one full live set Chabon performed with The Bats. Not just an article of historical interest, these songs hold up well, with the vinyl having an incredible quality, considering the fact that it was mastered from a demo tape. Mind Cure Records continues to perform a tremendous public service by restoring fascinating works from Pittsburgh's past. Bassist Lee Skirboll's liner notes are as interesting as the music, rounding out this must-have release. —Art Ettinger (Mind Cure)

BEDS, THE: Ride Again: Cassette

Some serious bad trip potential happening on this one, which speeds up the riffs from side B of *My War* from trudge to mid-tempo and throws in blown-out amp scuzz. At first, I thought the singer's screaming vox were gonna be all Spring all the time, but he has chops, and can mix it up: deadpan on some songs, howling on others, with echo mixed in to sinister effect. Hostility reigns supreme throughout. These cats would fit seamlessly into a Metz/Ex-Cult bill. Recommended. —Michael T. Fournier (Ranch, ranchrecords.bigcartel.com)

BEEKEEPERS: Self-titled: 7" EP

Beekeepers lead their record off with a faux-jazz, four-minute-long spiel about the inane and depressing

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life of a warehouse employee called "Pallet Stacking." The following two songs are uniform with the central theme of brainless consumerism and a depressingly mind-numbing suburban existence. The presentation is artful, although at times musically grandiose, which is a turn off for me. I do appreciate that the effort is DIY with all the songs being recorded at either their homes or work places, but the final product still leaves a lot to be desired. Anti-authoritarian bands such as Crass shared similar views but opted for reckless aggression to drive their point across and it worked so much better than avant garde saxophone blowing ever will. —Juan Espinosa (X!, beekkeepersweb.angelfire.com)

BEN DISASTER: "Another Word" b/w "Come Alive, Close My Eyes": 7"

This was my favorite record of the lot this month. It reminds me of the bands like the Plimsouls that fell just off popularity's beaten path. The vocals are rough in a sincere Replacements kind of way. The music is mostly upbeat with a dirty rock and roll vibe. This is the kind of band that you'd hear in a dive bar and fall in love with. —Ryan Nichols (Crude City)

BETTER OFF DAMNED: Endless Fight: CD

I don't really seek out this type of HC regularly these days, but this is a pretty solid load of pissed songs in a relatively old school style. There are some breakdowns. Some back-ups. They

don't get all emotional or experimental. Nothing ground breaking, but well done. This album keeps the pace. I tend to still look for a mosh riff to put a HC album over the top for me, but if you're esoteric about hardcore, this would be a good CD to have. —Billups Allen (Better Off Damned)

BIG CRUX: Ponchito: LP

This has "Minutemen" writ large across it in big letters, but don't be quick to dismiss it as rehash. 'Tis true they owe much to that much ballyhooed band of yore—the tinny telecaster sound, the song lengths, even their name I'm guessing was cribbed from a line in "Political Song for Michael Jackson to Sing"—but they take that inspiration off in other interesting directions (choruses and bilingual lyrics that don't read quite as much like blue-collar haikus, for starters) as well as mooshing in bits of other influences and sounds to brand the resulting output as theirs. While today's prevailing trend seems to be to stick to pre-determined and pre-approved templates, it's nice to hear a band that sounds like they're trying to build a divergent path off a band that built a divergent path. This is aces, I can only see them getting better from here, and I bet they rip live. —Jimmy Alvarado (Big Crux, bigcrux@gmail.com / Not Normal)

BITCH QUEENS: Kill Your Friends: CD

Kill Your Friends is a well-produced, sleazy, punky, barrock record from Basel, Switzerland. Certainly not for all tastes,

the vocalist is adept, as are the players. The lyrics are somewhat embarrassing, but that's par for the course with this sort of cock rock-influenced material. Turbojugend members worldwide will rejoice. Everyone else will run for the door. Which side are you on? —Art Ettinger (Luxnoise)

BLACK RAINBOW: Self-titled: LP

You're going to form a relationship with Black Rainbow. They designed the walls of your dream home. They're coming over to feed the cats while you're on vacation. They're in your kitchen, humming as steel-cut oats warm for breakfast. Black Rainbow are the friends you trust with your house keys or that you call, even after two years of no contact, when a real problem arises. So it makes sense that *Black Rainbow* is the fuzzy favorite blanket at the foot of your bed. It's extra warm, can wipe away your tears, doubles as a superhero cape, or provides your dog with a home base. If you're familiar with Allergic To Bullshit, Miami, or Los Canadians, you're already tight and you'll just be accepting another friend into your circle. If not, take a chance and wrap yourself up in the warmth of Black Rainbow's friendship. "Hold on to what's possible." —Matt Seward (Starcleaner, starcleaner.com)

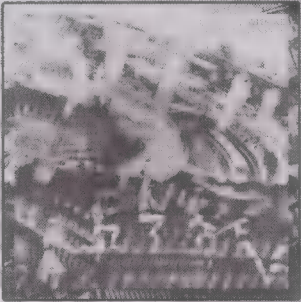
BLIND SHAKE, THE: Breakfast of Failures: LP

The guitar on here is so heavy and dark I was a little fearful it was on the wrong speed, as it sounded too good to be true.


The opening to "Old Lake" sounds like it could be a Melvins' song—the guitar sounds that good! Then the drums kick in and it gets noisy and out of whack from that point on in. There's a uneasiness in these songs that is alluring, something that would sound perfect in a show like *True Detective*. These songs are dark—mixing punk, psych, surf, and other strains of rock's distant glories to make this sinister sound. The songs are moderately fast paced, catchy, slightly damaged, and wound tight. "Parachute" bounces back and forth from fast, driving pace to bouts of laying back and assessing the moment, then that gives way to the swaggering "Dots in the Fog." Towards the end of the album, after the driving "Pollen," things start to get a little more noisy and drawn out when they slip into "In a Trance," and they ride it out until the very end. —M.Avg (Goner)

BLUE BLOODS, THE: Non-Rhotic: CD

First release from this Boston band in ten years! Was it worth the wait? Absolutely! Fourteen barn-burners are presented, showing that the chops are still intact. "Click" and "Drawn and Quartered" have been getting repeat action, but this one is flame resistant from start to finish. It looks like there's a handful of reworked Pug Uglies classics included as well, since they seem to share a member. If that is not enough to wet your whistle, they sample *Weird Science* on the last song. What else do you need to know? —Sean Koeppenick (East Grand; bluebloodsboston@gmail.com)



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BOYS: Demo 2013: 7"

This is ■ recognizable Bloated Kat release upon first listen. Intentionally progressive, the label prioritizes female and/or queer musicians at the front of their acts, and also promotes flyover country punks not hailing from the coastal behemoths of Los Angeles or New York. Bloated Kat has a tightly honed brand, and Boys are right on it, but pleasantly so. Hailing from Cincinnati, Ohio, Boys serves up guitar-propelled bubblegum pop punk along the lines of labelmates Lipstick Homicide and Jabber. None of these bands exist to make groundbreaking, innovative records, but they're all tireless ambassadors for the art of making one's own fun. Maura Weaver of the now-defunct Mixtapes contributes strong, sweet vocals with ■ '90s alternative pop edge, displaying a slight homage to Liz Phair or even Alanis. Relatable lyrics speak of suburban disillusionment with the predictability of daily life and the awkwardness of forging relationships. "Long Walk" is my favorite track, as the heaviest and most vulnerable, with a moody, contemplative slowdown that sweeps in at the minute-thirty mark. The production is DIY-rough, in a warm living room way. In "Sundae Skool" I hear a nod to Bratmobile and similar pop-driven riot grrrl, but also a slide into hardcore with a no-holds-barred acceleration at the end. It's easy to know what to expect from Bloated Kat—and therefore from Boys—but that also guarantees quality music that

facilitates a good time. —Claire Palermo (Bloated Kat, bloatedkatrecords@gmail.com, bloatedkatrecords.bandcamp.com)

BREAKOUT: True Crime: 7" EP

In a lot of ways, hardcore has become as entrenched a style as disco—form over substance, quality, or innovation—and the response from its staunchest proponents is often to hurl abuse and contempt at any band that has the temerity to fuck with the formula. Some of the swellest stuff to come out of that scene, however—Black Flag, Die Kreuzen, Big Black, Criminal Code, Butthole Surfers, Bill Bondsman, Fugazi, and so on—liberally pissed in the gene pool with often stunning results. That said, there's some nice thinking outside the box going on here. Although firmly within the hardcore camp, Breakout amalgamates the mid-tempo, primal yet oddly accessible qualities of Europe's punk/hardcore tradition with Midwestern U.S. sensibilities and ■ gruff howl reminiscent of Out Cold's Mark Sheehan into five potent, succinct blasts. Derivative? Sure, but the way they mix things up, and the way they own the sound makes 'em stand out from the pack. —Jimmy Alvarado (Grave Mistake)

BRIAN MCGEE: Ruin Creek: LP

Apparently, this is the third solo LP from an ex-Plow United member. The pretentious one sheet takes note of the amount of ex punk band members going

acoustic and makes sure the reviewer knows that this individual is not that. He moved to the mountains and immersed himself in American folk tradition. Too bad that did not include learning how to write ■ decent song. This is an entire album of overwrought vocals, uninteresting melodies, and ham-fisted lyrics. I continually find myself wondering how Drag The River can be such a phenomenal band and the rest of the "Punk dude goes acoustic" stuff is so not good. —Mike Frame (Creep)

BRIMSTONE HOWL:

Blowhard Deluxe: LP

I love the slurry and swinging tracks on *Blowhard Deluxe*. This album is grimmer than *Magic Hour*, a bit less pop bop-your-head wild than *Big Deal*. A bit of The Mummies, a bit Alex Chilton torn free from the Box Tops and Big Star. *Blowhard Deluxe* is heavy on the spooky blues reverb and rocker's drawl, which I hear can be achieved only through a devotion to Lone Star lager; monastic study of the works of Faulkner, Hannah, and O'Connor; or eating an Elvis Presley Rose from the highest point of Graceland. And yet they are from Nebraska. Who can say which is true Brimstone Howl? In any case, *Blowhard Deluxe* rocks with the bright guitars on "King of the Scene," and rolls with mid-tempo thump of "Landlocked+Waylaid." This album is a more patient, plodding, and steady than the others, but it's a keeper. Check out their bandcamp

for a free download of "Singles Collection," also great. —Jim Joyce (Dead Beat, dead-beat-records.com)

BRODY'S MILITIA:

Napalm Zeppelin Raids: EP

Right fuckin' here is a record that you need to run out and get. Or make your fingers do that tappy tap dance across your keyboard or mobile device and order this righteous black slab and have it sent direct to your turntable. Many have tried and most have failed, but Brody's Militia have successfully blended thrashy hardcore with ■ more hard rocking edge. It's like it was their secret weapon and they've been waiting some time to unleash it on the unsuspecting masses. This opens up with the skull-jarring thrash of "Toothless Skull" and then, suddenly, there's this catchy-as-hell riff that catches you unprepared—but it's so good and executed with precision—you go with it, and the songs and the rock just keep getting better and more dominant as the record plays. Hit the second side, and the Southern-fried rock seasonings really come to the fore, and yet the lyrical content is very much on the hardcore punk side with its straight-to-the-point attacks on ■ vapid world. "Sheep Fucking in the Heartland" and "Dumbfuck Fanfare" kill! The guitar tone is nasty, and the delivery has the finesse of ■ blunt instrument to the skull. I'm really hoping there's more to come from these guys. Continue down this path, please! —M.Avrq (SPHC)

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Buck Biloxi is home on Total Punk and Total Punk has ■ spokesman in Buck Biloxi. Take ■ listen to these songs and look at the packaging. This record has ■ more street level assault feel than the Fucks' debut LP (a most powerful record by all means.) Home-fi by necessity, but a sonic force when seen live. Buck Biloxi is no joke! –Sal Lucci (Total Punk)

I've adored this band from the first time I heard their *Singles Going Steady* album some thirty-odd years ago, so bearing that in mind, to my total geek-fan mind there are three Buzzcocks eras: 1) their "classic" period which begins with *Spiral Scratch* and ends with *Trade Test Transmissions*; 2) *Modern*, easily their nadir; and 3) their "second wind" period of their most recent three albums, including the one currently under discussion. The songs here are solid meat 'n' potatoes work for these cats—nothing will send the listener's jaw bouncing off the floor in wide-eyed wonder the way "What Do I Get" or "I Believe" once did, but they're handily working at levels well above the average gaggle of punters. Shelley and Diggle split songwriting evenly down the middle this time 'round, with five apiece, and both allow themselves to experiment a bit within the parameters of the band's sonic palette. Shelley's vocals may be a bit gruffer than usual, no doubt the

Orlando, Florida's Caffiends rip and roar through this pop punk, mayhem-praising release. I love the sound of this record and look forward to learning more about the band. Was to know what it sounds like? Imagine that you felt uneasy listening to one of your favorite bands, an American punk staple, because the legendary lead singer can be seen punching a female fan in the face on Youtube. Let's say you still love their music and its playfulness and all that it represents, but, you know, punching your fans is for MTV, rock-god douchebaggery, not punks. Then, you put on the Caffiends and the sound is familiar but, as far as you know, no one was punched in the face to make this good shit happen. Perhaps that was a long walk for a short trip. In short: Caffiends rule. Check them out. —John Mule (Brassneck, brassneckrecords. bigcartel.com / Chisel, chiselrecords. com / Jolly Ronnie, jollyronnierecords. com / Swamp Cabbage, swampcabbagerecords.com)


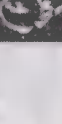
"Bloom Brigade" and "Sofie" come halfway through *Quitting* and catch Cassilis's skill for blending the all-instrument-as-percussion of hardcore with surprising melodies, like the latter song's ostinato, just a nice angry

Punk historians, take note that the aesthetic of this CD is the total embodiment of DIY self-promotion circa ten years ago. I'm talking printed paper label, WordArt drop shadows, photo collage of the band members for the insert. I swear that's not a cheap shot—I just haven't seen a new release like this since 2004, when they all looked just like this. Anyway, this is some heavily Costello-influenced power pop, mixed in with some New York Dolls and roughed up with a little Replacements grit. Apparently this is a

Chumped's first release featured half a dozen tracks of hook-laden pop punk structured to cater for a loose and energetic delivery, which worked favorably for the band. The band's debut album contains twice as many songs but I would be hard pressed to exclusively use the term pop punk this time around as Chumped have added an edge of something verging on introspection to its music. There is less of an emphasis on the raucous and more of an equal footing for a melancholic approach, found both in the lyrics but more noticeably in the music. That switch is evident in the first four tracks with the first two providing a gradual stepping stone up to the more hectic "Coffee" before leading into "Novella Ella Ella Eh" where the foot is put firmly to the floor. As the album



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reaches a close, that foot eases off the pedal, resulting in ■ final pair of tracks, "The Pains of Being ..." and "Old and Tired" which lead *Teenage Retirement* into ■ relatively somber end. One of many positives on this album is its recording, which retains the same carefree quality of its predecessor, helping the songs breathe and not be compressed into a lifeless entity. The versatility shown by Chumped makes it stand out ■ a band worth keeping track of in the future. —Rich Cocksedge (Anchorless, anchorlessrecords@hotmail.com, anchorlessrecords.com)

CJ RAMONE: "Understand Me?" b/w "Rise Above": 7"

The word "Ramone" has to be enough to open more than a few doors for anyone who legitimately holds that moniker. Such ■ person certainly deserves a level of respect for having performed in one of the greatest bands ever. As such, I am intrigued when new musical ventures are attempted by ■ former Ramone, approaching them with higher expectations than I would many other artists' new work. At this stage I must admit this is an almost total rewrite of my first version this review I initially felt the 7" was lackluster and insipid, comparing it to ■ two-week-old lettuce discovered in the fridge. (My first attempt at reviewing this was written on 8th October 2014, which coincidentally is CJ's birthday ■ well ■ being the twenty fifth anniversary of ■ last seeing the Ramones and the only time I saw the band with him on

bass.) However, with repeated plays the lead track slowly began to grow on me. There's no denying that this has some Ramones influences heard in both the guitars and some of the vocals. It's a catchy number—albeit one which is fairly predictable in terms of chord progressions and song structure—but eventually it found a modicum of favor from my overly picky brain. I can't be anywhere near so forgiving with the flipside though, despite the involvement of Dez Cadena on guitar and backing vocals. Black Flag's original "Rise Above" had grit and bile oozing from every crevice, resulting in ■ track that, to this day, still makes my hairs stand on end. This cover drops all of those qualities and offers nothing more than ■ bland rendition of ■ true classic. —Rich Cocksedge (Fat Wreck)

COLLAPSE: *Disarm*: 7" EP

Out of Detroit comes this fast, radical hardcore that defies the easy categorization of anarcho. Collapse is solid crust, dishing up plenty of breakdowns and blast beats, but veiled in ■ stoner fog that avoids cliché and approaches the forest-moss darkness of Thou or Cloud Rat. There's even a song called "My Little Droney," betraying their love of drone. Yet there's too much of a message to risk getting lost in unintelligible bellowing. Their vocalist Ashleigh brings to mind the formidable Mia Zapata of the Gits and Jen Thorpe of Submission Hold, emoting each word with the weight of ■ manifesto. "Fuck You I'm Done"

brings to mind early Black Flag but with ■ riot grrrl's laser focus on the political implications of household items: "I took out the trash / I brought in the mail / Sit, watch the world / From my TV." Feminist sentiment is strong throughout. "Left" is the most Submission Hold-ish track, shifting on ■ pin from lumbering stoner drag-step into a rolling, tribal metal rhythm with impassioned war cries layered over the doom. There is room for growth sonically. At times, Ashleigh chants in her own world and the rest of the band is in ■ manic sprint to keep up with her. But if the soul of anarcho is the message, *Disarm* succeeds in getting that across: question everything, from the coffee cup on your desk to cops in the street. In the spirit of Crass, each member of Collapse walks the radical path that they're spitting about. Every component of this release was handmade with care, from its spray-painted and etched jewel case, to the zine-style typewriter text lyric sheet and a personalized letter to "the good people of Razorcake" enclosed. This is a band that wants an individual, reciprocal connection to their fans, and they're earning it. —Claire Palermo (Self-released, collapsebooking@gmail.com, collapsepunk.com)

CONTINGENT:

Homme Sauvage: 7" single

Absolute killer single here! Contingent are an old band from Brussels who existed from 1979 to 1981, released one single, then recorded the two songs

on here, and promptly split up before this was even released (which took over thirty years to happen). But at least it happened, and thank fuck that it did. These songs are great. Catchy without being wimpy or sappy, shot through with urgency and wound up tight. My favorite of the two is the flipside, "Vivons Tres Vite." It comes on with some scratchy "chika-chicka" guitar with a stabbing downstroke which comes in every couple seconds that immediately has the energy at ■ simmer. The vocals ■ delivered in an excited ■■■■■ and sometimes he hangs on the end of a word for effect. The beat is catchy as hell, and, ■ the song goes along, the energy picks up and up. It's songs like this that remind ■ of what made/makes punk awesome. If you like bands like No Hope For The Kids, or the Vicious, then you will want to seek this one out. —M.Avrq (Danger, dangerrecordsparis@gmail.com)

COPYRIGHTS, THE: *Report*: CD

The Copyrights propagated a style of pop punk before the market became saturated. Because of the many imitators since, they can sound derivative. It's hard for me to fully enjoy this album because it reminds me so much of high school. However, once past the, at times, slightly juvenile and repetitive hooks, there are some amusingly clever lyrics—something that never fails to delight me. "I'm throwing nickels at my student loans / and they haven't made a dent" is a sentiment relatable to any college student or

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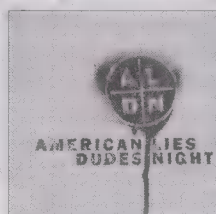
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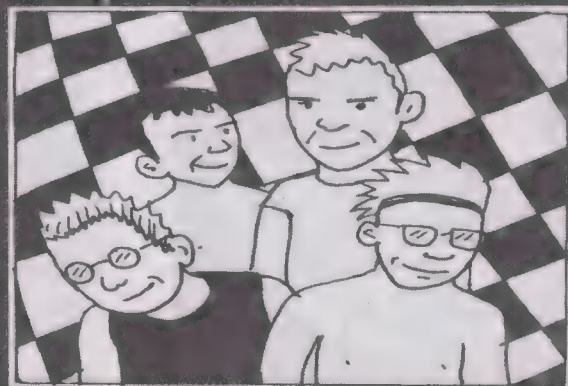
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graduate. "The New Frontier" is ■ musical ode to the works of Steinbeck. And the simple, but honest, lines, "I wouldn't change it if I could / But that's easy to say / I can't change it anyway," from "This World Is Such ■ Drag" are a perfect summation of my current outlook towards my dead end job and overwhelming school load. All this, wrapped in a pop punk package, make for ■ easily digestible—if saccharine—listening experience. —Ashley Ravelo (Red Scare, redscare.net, toby@redscare.net)

COZY: *Button by Button*: LP

Hoarders of vinyl and purveyors of tropes and idioms, Cozy deliver dork anthems of shoulder-shaking insouciance patterned after early '70s glam rock (band members are named "Bonkers Waddington," "Baz Bosworthy," "Gordie Leatherby" and "Fabian Blockbuster," if that tells you anything) but coming across as more of a mash-up between AC/DC and the Rubinoos than anything else. When these clever lads have it all clickin', they're pretty formidable, but I don't think the Charlie-Watts-style behind-the-beat drumming always works in their favor. Wrong trope, Fabian! Surely singing the falsetto part to "Pure Lady" must have been a special time in that young man's life. Carry on. BEST SONG: "Button by Button." BEST SONG TITLE: "Denim Dream." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The only other album cover I can remember that has the band photos

printed in brown was Vern Nussbaum's immortal *The Boogie Man* LP circa 1975, so buy with confidence. —Rev. Nørb (Hozac, hozacrecords.com)

CURTIS ■■■■ / CHRISTIAN D'ORBIT: *"The Scandalizer" b/w "Drive ■ Crazy": 7"*

This is a bit of an unusual reissue from 1981. The folks on here ■ related to The Penetrators, who released both of these tracks (on a record Slovenly recently reissued), although neither seem to have any other solo releases. The fact that it is ■ unusual choice for ■ reissue, however, does not make it ■ bad choice. Beyond that, who doesn't like a 7" stuffed full of swingin' sounds? "The Scandalizer" is a rhythm and blues rock'n'roller, wherein the dude screams about how he's "the best around." Sounds like it could have been sitting on ■ shelf for about twenty-five years before its initial release. The flip features a raw and catchy garage punk number with yelled female vocals over the top. Definitely worth looking up, especially for the backside. —Vincent (Windian)

DARK GYPSIES: *Greco's Back*: CD

The Greco in question is Ron Greco, aka "Ron the Ripper" of full-tenured SF punk legends Crime. These seven songs do have ■ bit of that darkly shambolic Crime-y feel to them, but were also reminding me of The Gun Club, if Jeffrey Lee Pierce's Delta Blues leanings would have been erased and replaced with a more San Francisco-y vibe. These recordings

have a sparsely-twiddled demo quality to them, which works against them in matters of providing transcendent moments of refined excellence, but works in their favor as regards projecting creator intimacy. Traders in black fabric dye futures take note and plan accordingly. BEST SONG: "Rebel House Girl." BEST SONG TITLE: "Hey Gene." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Lyrics and liner notes make reference to—and misspell—Kezar Stadium, former home of the San Francisco 49ers, and, briefly, the Oakland Raiders. —Rev. Nørb (Rebel House)

DEAD SPACE, THE: *Faker*: LP

Beefed-up post-punk in the vein of Joy Division or early Swans. They do what all good post-punk bands do: create a sense of openness and space within their music that allows the listener to fall into the vast soundscape. As always, the heavier songs are my favorite. There's a good balance, too, because bands can sometimes lean too far in the direction of slower songs. This record did not put me to sleep, and that's a great thing. Grade: B+. —Bryan Static (12XU, 12xu.net)

DEATH TO TYRANTS: *Untitled: 7" EP*


Hypnotic instrumental tracks, volatile melodies, and ample crash and splash in the drum department. If El Ten Eleven is the electronic tinkles of a new spaceship, and Explosions In The Sky is a crash-landed spaceship from ancient civilizations, then Death To

Tyrants is the dudes who tried to make the spaceship out of a pickup truck, rubber bands, and hot toddies: big, bone-warming earth rock with a bit of that aerial zoominess that at least I associate with vocal-free instrument-driven groups. Comes with ■ digital download so you can listen to this fine shit while you walk around in that white snowy ambience. —Jim Joyce (Tor Johnson, torjohnsonrecords.com)

DEATHWISH: *Self-titled: Box Set*


This is ■ three-piece vinyl box set by a Boston band that shed its skin from record to record. A brief history of the band: Record one was recorded in 1983 and has been expanded to seven songs from the unauthorized bootleg release that made the rounds online. It's crisp and clear now since it was remixed by ace Don Zientara in 2013. Record two first came out as a cassette release in 1987 in ■ limited run. The band went under the alias of The Loved Ones (sort of like Angry Samoans with *Queer Pills*) and changed gears a bit to more of ■ psychedelic '70s punk angle. Mostly just distributed in the Boston area at that point, most everyone who got a copy knew it was still Deathwish. Record three was recorded one year earlier, but wasn't finished until 1995. Bassist Jordan Wood (Slapshot) plays on one song and bassist Pat Leonard (Moving Targets) is featured on the other. So drop the pencil, the pop quiz will be later. The music on this box set requires a dissection. Record one is a furious blast of hardcore from its

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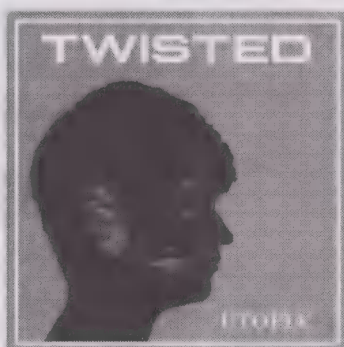


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time. Think Jerry's Kids jamming with Minor Threat. "Condemned for Life" and "Backstab" will benefit from high volume on your turntable. Once your ears stop ringing, file this next to the first Gang Green record in your collection. Record two is a different animal. What if The Dictators made a record with Stiv Bators, David Johansen, and Nick Marsh (Flesh For Lulu) as guest singers? This would have come pretty damn close. "Minnesota Strip" is my favorite here, but "Back of the Bus" sports some Dag Nasty-ish guitar riffage that will keep the punters smiling. Finally, record three. Only two songs. "What We've Got" is a studio version of what was normally an instrumental show opener for the band. "Young and Undefined" features Leonard's fluid bass playing to great effect. The only way to get this is direct from the label's site and then play it *loud*. —Sean Koepenick (Disclaimer, disclaimerrecordings.com)

DIGITAL LEATHER / THE HUSSY:

Split: LP

Digital Leather: Minimalist synth stuff—sludgy, bee-buzz bass lines and an overall gloomy, depressed vibe. The Hussy: Synth-drenched mid-tempo punk with a much brighter vibe than their recordmates. —Jimmy Alvarado (Southpaw, southpaw-records.com)

DIRTY FENCES: Ladies Choice: 7"

Dirty Fences are a band I've heard about for some time, but never really checked out. My loss, since this single

is great. "Say You Love Me" is a hit. Glam garage from NYC that's done well. Lots of grit and proper attitude with these cats. Poppy, with dirtbag swagger, recorded by Miss Alex White. A fine crunch of a record, courtesy of Warren Bailey's Oops Baby Records. Some labels chug out releases you can trust, and this powerhouse mostly-singles label falls into that category. —Steve Adamyk (Oops Baby, oopsbabyrecords.com)

DOT DASH!: Humanity Will Fall / Devastation: CD

I initially heard Dot Dash! a few years ago when they were on a nifty split 10" with Ultraman. Now their first two albums are compiled on one handy CD, for those not in a hunting mood. Dot Dash! sing in English, but hail from France. They sound like a happier, more accessible version of Samiam. This is a real treat for fans of earnest, emo-ish pop, which—judging by my nonstop swaying—includes me. Dash to your local record store and look for Dot Dash! —Art Ettinger (Dashbrook Zound, monadjudant69@yahoo.fr)

DRUGS DRAGONS: II & I/II: LP

Drugs Dragons start quick and fuck you up hard, but then they leave ya with a long comedown. Not a bad life-questioning comedown. Rather, you get stuck with glimpses of your previous heights, and false signals of their return. Until you realize that you aren't getting back where you want, and the feeling dissipates into nothing. And in the

aftermath, you wonder if you pumped it up more than it pumped you up. In other words, *II & I/II* begins with this big psychedelic garage ripper, replete with snarled vox buried and blended, that just won't quit; literally, there were several parts where you thought it was the end of the ride, but then they take ya for another worthwhile spin. Once the first track finally relinquishes its last breath, Drugs Dragons charge into a march on a psychedelic spiral. The spiral continues, feeling as though you're moving neither up nor down, yet the ride is thoroughly grand. But then it descends furiously until burns out. Next up is a wild and danceable blast, but it sounds pretty accessible after what was just put forth. After that, kinda felt like the jams were being unenthusiastically spewed out more than kicked out. The rest of the album nonetheless maintains aspects of the big start, and doesn't whimper as such, but it didn't go out with its bang. —Vincent (Dusty Medical)

DUCK ■ COVER: Self-titled: LP

Boston four-piece delivers an eight-song shotgun blast that may cause you to go stone deaf forever. But just know your limits and you will be fine. This is no rookie ball by these rabble-rousers. They have all paid their dues and their effort shows the proper results. "Dead Giveaway" features a Stooge-like vibe while "Stand Corrected" would not have been out of place on the first 'Mats platter. "Gather Your Strength" even has a bit of a "Bonzo

Goes to Bitburg" melody in the mix. But these dudes have a sound that is all their own; you just need to take the plunge. Highly recommended. —Sean Koepenick (duckcover1.bandcamp.com/releases, duckandcoverboston@gmail.com)

DYSTOPIA: Human=Garbage: 2 ■ LP

I remember the first time I heard this album, back around 1994. I bought this on CD along with stuff like Deviated Instinct and Doom. I listened to those a few times, but the Dystopia disc stayed in my player for a long, long time. There was nothing else like them. Towards the end of the decade, there were some bands that did try to bite their style, and it was pretty apparent these interlopers were cheesy as hell and quickly forgotten. For me, Dystopia is one of the best bands from the 1990s, and one I can still listen to and be blown away. Musically, they were a perfect mix of metal and hardcore punk with all the offshoots—like death metal, crust, grind, and sludge—thrown in for flavoring. The guitar sounds evil, the percussion is tight and forceful, and the bass has this sinister lurking way about it. The part of "Stress Builds Character," when the music kicks in never gets old. So f'n good it's unreal! The whole album is solid as hell. There's never a moment where it gets dull or repetitive. They keep the tempos varied, such as the instrumental "The Middle" and some songs that are largely sound collages, like "Sanctity," "Love/Hate," or the



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lumbering "Ignorance of Pride" to offset the sonic pummeling of songs like "Ruptured Silence" and "Hands That Mold." This edition is true to the CD version, ■ it has the five songs from the original vinyl pressing, along with their material from their splits with Embittered and Grief. All pressed on two clear sheets of vinyl to be played at 45 rpm. I'm reluctant to call most records classic, but this truly is. I would like to think that over time people, if they haven't already, will come to see this is ■ a pretty important piece in the history of underground music. Original, groundbreaking, and all that. —M.Avrq (Tankcrimes, tankcrimes.com)

EASTER TEETH: *Being Ali* ■ with Your Thoughts ■ for Inmates: ■■

Imagine a Minutemen show in a church basement, but with Les Claypool on bass and James Brown howling on the mic. That's Easter Teeth. Blood brothers Josh and Tim Eymann serve up a fresh take on funk-punk convergence that is light-hearted and unforced. Easter Teeth tosses away the econo jam and goes big with Death From Above 1979 growling bass and a Contortions horn section, but maintains DIY finesse, using whatever gadgets are around. They play super-tight, stopping on a dime. If "Break out the Knives" doesn't get your toes tapping, you might not be human. "Get up, get down, just ■ long as you get there," or in other words, get up offa that thang! Hardcore roots emerge in the lyrics, which mix cute wordplay with anti-government provocation.

The title track contains my favorite line—zero convictions but ■ litany of guilt—evoking ■ kind of working-class restlessness. Dueling yell-vocals blend the renegade marching band rollick of the Taxpayers with Minor Threat urgency. "Where Have All the Demons Gone" is the most sonically interesting, seasoned with keyboard-synth roars that verge on Nine Inch Nails industrial territory. Unpopular opinion: I couldn't get through the hornless versions of each song. I hear the argument for allowing listeners to curate the album to personal taste, but it's just not the same. With the brass, we're at ■ thinking man's soul party—who could ask for more? Put this on, get sweaty, and pour one out for D. Boon and the Godfather of Funk. —Claire Palermo (Veritas Vinyl, veritasvinyl@gmail.com, veritasvinyl.net)

ERGS, THE: *Dorkrockcorkrod*: LP

The vinyl version of this record originally came out in 2005 and has been unavailable for a bit, so to mark the ten year anniversary of its release, the folks at Don Giovanni have remastered and re-released this, the debut LP from The Ergs. It's ■ move that makes sense, as The Ergs legacy is bigger than ever, despite the fact that they broke up in 2008. The Ergs were ■ great band—playing out like an updated version of the Descendents with softer edges yet still with the ability to pen a fucking near perfect pop punk song. This LP is ■ modern classic, jam packed with some truly great songs

about girls, love, and... did I mention girls? If you like the less traditionally "punk" Descendents songs about girls, then you'll love this. But you've most likely already had this record for years anyways. —Mark Twistworthy (Don Giovanni, dongiovannirecords.com)

ESPECTROSTATIC: *Escape from Witchtopolis*: LP

I remember one time while reviewing Alex Cuervo's band Hex Dispensers that I felt that each song was like ■ story on an episode of show like *The Twilight Zone* or *Outer Limits*. If that is the case, then Cuervo's solo, electronic project Espectrostatic is the soundtrack to the individual scenes in any given episode of that same show. This is the second LP for Espectrostatic and I couldn't be happier. I love to sink into the creepiness of songs like "Removing the Bandages" or "The Cold Spot" or get tensed up by the futuristic chase sounds of "The Feral Kids" or "This Is a War Universe." As ■ horror and sci-fi fan, I really love how I can take the song titles, and while listening to the songs, I can fully imagine the scenario. It is a completely different listening experience and I can't get enough. I've also got to mention the amazing cover art by Drazen Kozjan. It fits the record perfectly. —Ty Stranglehold (Trouble In Mind, troubleinmindrecs.com)

FILMSTRIP: *Moments of Man*: LP

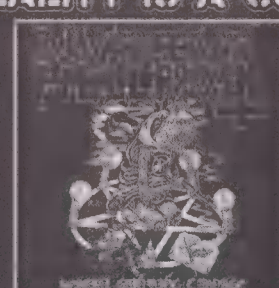
This has a lot in common with the softer, smoother side of college alt-rock and the various waves of indie that

came after it, from R.E.M. to Smashing Pumpkins to Grandaddy. Frontman Dave Taha does take on an uncanny Michael Stipe drawl to deliver lines like, "Like a video game, flashing nothing, everybody is stuck on explode." The pacing is the real accomplishment of this record; this is a band that knows how to ramp up and mellow out in exactly the right places. Not something you really notice until you hear it done right. There's the hint of a folksy twang running through side A, especially the one-two opening punch of "Don't You Know" and "Waiting on ■ Train"—not so much ■ to nudge this thing into full-on cowpunk territory, but enough to call maybe the first Titus Andronicus album to mind. It's on side B that this tendency blossoms into the swiny melancholy of "Wild Abandon" and "Is You Is," the aching gospel finale. This is my first listen to Filmstrip, but I get the feeling I'm catching them on their way up to something bigger. —Indiana Laub (Exit Stencil, info@existencil.org, existencil.org)

FISTULA: *Vermin Prolificus*: LP

There's ■ repeating mantra in this record, pulled from what sounds like a sound clip from an old movie, which goes, "The drugs are more important than you." This record is really dumb, but in its own way really great. It's made for stoners who like evil stuff and demons, so get on that if you're high as fuck right now. The record will constantly remind you about drugs, by the way, so be prepared to have some

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weird feelings as it addresses you, the audience, directly. It's like grindcore, but I don't know enough about the genre to compare to another band accurately. There's definitely some doom metal in there. I wish I could type out a picture of the cover art, but I'm not that good at ASCII art. **GRADE: A-** —Bryan Static (To Live A Lie, tolivealie.com)

FRAU: Self-titled: LP

Crude, bass-heavy, lady-punk with yelly vocals. A spontaneous *Penis Envy* influenced by early hardcore. It would have fit in perfectly with one of the "artier" tracks on the *Welcome to 1984* comp (I'm looking at you "Fish In a Bowl"). Frantic and hard, while still being off-kilter and righteous. —Daryl (Dead Beat)

G. GREEN: Area Codes: LP

Second LP offered up by Sacramento band G. Green. A contrast to their first LP, *Area Codes* is more focused and mature, with their signature alt-quirk post-punk sound. Still, it's sharp, odd, and catchy pop. *Area Codes* is cleanly recorded—a yin to the yang of their gnarly—albeit hell of a lot more inebriated—live set. Mike's anxious post-punk guitar sets the tone of each song, sounding slightly off kilter but somehow perfectly balancing each melody, weaving in and out of Andrew's more distorted rhythms. Both Andrew and Mike sing on this LP, their screechy yelps and hollers are both lighthearted and emotive. The stand out, "Brain Fuck," is choppy dance punk that sounds a lot like one

of my favorite bands, Synthetic ID. "Fake Affair" features drummer Liz on vocals. She's got a flat, atonal cool girl sound. They also make good use of her voice on backup throughout as well. And "Drugs" is a drunken lazy rock'n'roll song that makes me want to... well... get drunk and party. Well done. —Camille Reynolds (Mt. St. Mtn, mtstmntn.com)

G.F.P. / SCHEISSE MINNELLI:

at Its Worst: 12"

So you say you've got a split record featuring a crazy drawing of a Viking skeleton grinding coping on a pool full of radioactive waste while slamming back a bottle of booze on the front cover? I'm listening. General Fucking Principle kicks it off with a heavy mid-'80s hardcore vibe. Dayglo Abortions come to mind (not an unusual occurrence for me). This is really good stuff. After I listened, I noticed that G.F.P. features punk rock legend Greg Hetson on guitar and skateboard legend Tony Alva on bass. Rad! Now on to the other side and Scheisse Minnelli. This is a band that I've never heard, but I've always been an admirer of their band name. It makes me laugh every time I think of it, let alone read it or hear someone say it. I am happy to be able to say that I really like their tunes, too. Very similar to G.F.P., but I'd say that Scheisse is a little more technical. Bonus points for working "No Whammys, No Whammys, Big Bucks" into a song. Holy shit, is that Tesco Vee rapping on a funky disco

song to finish up the record? I believe it is. This is a killer record that is going to get a lot of mileage around here. —Ty Stranglehold (Rockstar)

GENERACION SUICIDA:

Todo Termina: 12"

Killer Los Angeles punk rock. Dark, melodic guitar lines, driving, mid-tempo rhythms, and raw but melodic vocals, delivered entirely in Spanish. This reminds me a lot of Masshysteri from Sweden. Both contain a melancholic yet energetic musical feel and though I don't understand either language, the melodies and obvious passion carry the vocals enough to make up for not knowing the content of the lyrics. More than enough to earn repeated listens. —Chad Williams (Going Underground, goingundergroundrecords.net)

GINO AND THE GOONS: Shake It!: LP

The excellent first Gino And The Goons 12" on Total Punk was a mess of furious garage rock that I couldn't get enough of—loud, distorted, and catchy. It's a couple years later and Gino And The Goons are back with a new offering that initially seems a little more restrained, yet, at the same time, brings the garage rock'n'roll ferocity to a new level with this band. There are some serious nods to the Ramones here, but, ultimately, I see this as a fringe piece of the Budget Rock puzzle that keeps getting better and better with every listen. —Mark Twistworthy (Black Gladiator / Slovenly)

GIVV: Self-titled: Cassette

I'd classify this as hip-hop beatbox noise. Which I'm ill-equipped to do, but that's my best guess. Looped industrial noise with warped, slowed down beatboxing. I'm a bit perplexed as to why they sent this one in to *Razorcake*. Not saying it's bad, I'm saying it's not punk. —Camille Reynolds (Ranch, rachrecords.bigcartel.com)

GOD GIVEN ASS: Keeping Up Appearances!: 7"

Ever wonder what might have happened if the Beatles had decided to reinvent themselves and start a punk band? Finnish power poppers God Given Ass entertain that fantasy, presenting a classic power pop collage of '60s/'70s rock in *Keeping Up Appearances!* God Given Ass shows fun potential, but they need to move beyond retro emulation and find something distinct to explore. The vocals are low and resonant, with a sound like Kevin Seconds channeling Danzig's baritone, and could be harnessed to dramatic effect if the band wanted to go in a heavier direction. My expectations were elevated by the glam Bowie-nod name and gender-bending cover art (which features a man in a pink apron and pink thigh high stockings reclining on a bed) and then I was handed a cheap wedding entertainer attempt at punk. "It's Not Alright" has a nice Wipers-ish guitar sound, but at this point I also began to realize that every single song on this record is about women from a man's perspective, either on how she's totally

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missing out by not dating him or pissing him off by acting like one of the boys. That's an element of music that doesn't need to be revived. —Claire Palermo (Blast Of Silence, info@blastofsilence.org, blastofsilence.org)

GOOO: Globular Clusterfuck: Cassette
Quirky, experimental laptop songs which remind me of grade-Z Ween. Tried; can't. —Michael T. Fournier (SDMPDX)

GUNK: Gradual Shove: LP

Take yer standard indie rock-type stuff, put it in a Shake 'n' Bake bag with a bit of psychedelic influence and that overblown production sound popular within certain factions of the '90s shoegaze phenomenon, and mix vigorously. Results are surprisingly consistent—loud, woozy, sludgy, and still tuneful. —Jimmy Alvarado (Square Of Opposition, square_of_opposition@hotmail.com)

HARD LEFT:

Skinheads Home for Christmas: 7"

Something to spike your holiday punch with. I pretty much hate most Christmas songs. This is usually because they're either too sentimental, feel forced, or are just plain terrible. This is probably because I don't really like Christmas. Bah fucking humbug. But "Skinheads Home for Christmas" is—dare I say it—fun. It's got a super catchy guitar hook and charming mix of grizzled Johnny Rotten style vocals with a chorus of sweet, screamy

female gang vocals. Flip to B-side for ■ rockin' Bay City Rollers cover of "Yesterday's Hero." Hard Left is self-described as "Hard Mod," ■ mix of street punk, mod rock, and pop. Members of Manatee, Lunchbox, and Boyracer make up Hard Left, but don't let that fool you; this is straight punk. This will be a post Xmas review, but this can definitely be in rotation for your eggnog-chugging party next December. —Camille Reynolds (Future Perfect, futureperfectrecords.com)

HARD SKIN: We Are the Wankers: 7"

It's kind of hard to pinpoint what makes Hard Skin so great. Is it the fact that they are an amazing oi band, or that they're "takin' the piss" so to speak? It doesn't matter. All I know is when I put ■ Hard Skin record on, I've got a smile on my face and I can feel my liver clench up because it knows it's going to be beaten with alcohol again. Another round for the wankers! —Ty Stranglehold (1-2-3-4 Go!)

HARSH REALMS: Pelep: CD

If my Menzingers and Riverboat Gamblers records were to breed in some sleazy hotel, this Dutch (?) band is the spawn that I imagine would arise from such ■ union. The vocals are urgent and anthemic (there's the Menzingers), and the melodies have some sizzling, inventive guitar work (and now the Riverboat Gamblers tumble out). There is ■ lot more to this than its first impression as a document of post-emo bellowing angst—I'm

wanting to raise my fists and kick down doors while simultaneously feeling the urge to bop bop around the room. Harsh Realms have got it going on—I'm really looking forward to going deaf to this on my way to work. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Shield, harshrealms.com)

HDQ: When Worlds Collide: 7"

Melodic hardcore that, if you wanted to, you could trace all the way back to Revolution Summer. You could also just put on the Embrace record, which would probably be better for you. From that chugging, over-produced, "barre chord wallpaper" school of punk. —Matt Werts (Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.com)

HEXIS: XI: LP

Dark doom hardcore metal out of Denmark rises forth from Hexis. The striking, minimalist black and white matte LP cover is desolate and beautiful. Rapid fire bass drum and throbbing bass pummel your ears to submission. Slow-churning at first, the record ebbs then whips to ■ straight-up frenzy, somehow completely controlled and absolutely chaotic at the same time. The metallic guitar weaves broad-knife strokes into fine needle-like scratches. It's still melodic, but fierce. Layered on top like toxic ooze are abrasive, harsh, throat-tearing vocals. It's the hard metal edge of Iron Lung and melodic undertones Una Bestia Incontrolable. It's pure rage. —Camille Reynolds (Dead Tank)

HOLLY ■ PLASTIC:

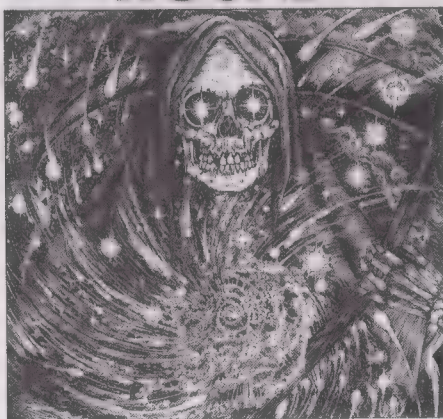
We Will Give This World Away: CD

Track three is called, "If I Were a Folk Singer, Folk Singers Would Laugh," and it perfectly sums up the sounds that Andrew Johnson (Holly & Plastic) has created. I had looked for a band lineup and learned that this is a one man band project. These songs are very full for just one man. Guitar (both electric and acoustic), drums, bass, and he even back up vocals—I'm guessing he sings with himself, though the voices don't always seem to match. There are moments I'm reminded of J Mascis, a little Death Cab For Cutie, but mostly Andrew Jackson Jihad. Fairly typical singer / songwriter mellow jams that are good for chillin' the fuck out. A few of these songs, especially the last track, nearly put me to sleep. If that's your thing, this is for you. —Kayla Greet (Double Plus Good, doubleplusgoodrecords.com)

HORROR SECTION / EATEN BACK TO LIFE: Split in Two: LP

This record ruined lyric sheets for me. Up until now, my ritual upon cracking open a new record was to first inspect the lyric sheet, scanning it for secrets and wonders. Then I would put the record on and listen to it as I clutched the lyric sheet, following along with every word. This record doesn't have ■ lyric sheet. It has trading cards. One trading card for every song, with an image on the front and lyrics on the back. Oh, and the images on the front? Monsters. Because every song is about monsters. Michael Myers. Freddy

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Krueger. Zombies. How the hell can I possibly enjoy lyric sheets after this, after holding the Leatherface card in my hand while Horror Section blasts their way through "Survive?" I held that card in my sweaty hand, reading the lyrics and realizing that the song has a brilliant dual meaning. On the surface, it can be read as a song about a girl struggling with a possessive boyfriend. Except the image on the trading card reveals that it's not a boyfriend she's worried about, it's Leatherface, and, yes, he wants to "tear me and my friends apart," except not in the metaphorical sense, but in the with-a-chainsaw sense. The logical part of my brain wants to say that it takes more than trading cards and monster movie references to make a good record, but does it really? In this case, the question doesn't even matter, because both Horror Section and Eaten Back To Life bring a unique spin on pop punk and horror worship. There's no way you're getting out of this listening experience without having a lot of fun. —MP Johnson (Eccentric Pop)

HOT TIP: Demo: Cassette

I saw Hot Tip at a sports bar (or it seemed that way) in Buffalo and I thought I was seeing the newest incarnation of Nation Of Ulysses or at least a band that would willingly crush whatever punk status quo still exists. I'm still not really over how good they were. Their demo doesn't disappoint—the guitar lines are the best of deconstructed '90s sub-underground hardcore; the general

vibe is smart, murky, wild, pissed. Easily one of my favorite new bands. They'll probably take over the world someday, if we're lucky. —Matt Werts (Drug Party, drugparty.storenvy.com)

HYSTERESE: Self-titled: LP

Potent, muscly punk from Germany, I believe. They keep tempos mostly around the mid-range, and the overall sound is such that it wouldn't be out of the ballpark of fans of Dirtmap Records' lengthy output, but there's often a dark tinge to things and the guitars have a nice grinding/churning quality in spots with adds some nice textures. Good stuff. —Jimmy Alvarado (Taken By Surprise)

I LOVE YOU BUT I'VE CHOSEN

DARKNESS: Dust: LP

There's that old adage that the more things change, the more they stay the same. A lot has changed since I Love You But I've Chosen Darkness released their first album, *Fear Is on Our Side*, in 2006, but in comparing that album with the ten songs on their recently released second album, *Dust*, it sounds like though this latest offering could've come out in 2007. With all the changes that have occurred in the music world since 2006, the band still punch out gloomy post-punk similar to Interpol or Joy Division, with guitar work occasionally reminiscent of Paul Newman. (This kind of makes sense since one of the members of ILYBICD played in Paul Newman, but he played bass, not guitar.) The songs are catchy

and dance-able, but not quite as dark as on their debut. (Perhaps some of the songs even have a glimmer of hope?) I love that album and still listen to it regularly. I'm not quite as enamored with this latest offering, but get back with me in eight years and I may love *Dust* just as much. —Kurt Morris (Secretly Canadian)

INTERCOURSE: Self-titled: Cassette

My tolerance for musical experimentation is pretty low. I appreciate it when bands do something different, but it needs to be in context for me to really enjoy it. I'm never going to sit down and get into music that is spazzy just for the sake of being spazzy. I need something else to sink my teeth into: comedy, anger, something. In the case of Intercourse, I love that they are willing to do different stuff musically. Greg Ginn shit. Weird guitar stuff that I'm not music nerd enough to explain. Messed up time signatures. Shit like that. But it's all tied to an anchor of belligerence. That's something I can really get behind. Just frothing at the mouth, white-knuckled belligerence. Intercourse proves just how well spazziness and belligerence go together. —MP Johnson (Self-released)

INVISIBLE TEARDROPS, THE: "Cereal Killer" b/w "Little Killer": 7"

Oddly affecting garage trifles from this Alabama band. Could be the organ? Or the singer? He doesn't treat it like it's a joke but he doesn't treat it like it's serious either. They're also not total formalists about rock'n'roll; the songs

feel loose, goofy, slightly bummed. I've never felt wistful listening to a song about a murderous breakfast before. Nice work. —Matt Werts (Arkam, arkamrecords.net)

KADDISH: Thick Letters to Friends: LP

Haven't come across anything quite like this before. I can best describe the Scottish band Kaddish as post-pop hardcore punk (still with me?) with frenetic melodic guitar and the echoes of traditional Scottish music (with a possible tinge of Mission Of Burma influence throughout). Lax, melodious guitar quickly finds itself into hardcore throw downs, then back again. The change-ups really had me guessing what's next. At times, they had me wandering aimlessly. Emo-screamo, torn vocals drenched in desperation added uneasiness to their overall sound—as well as the vocals never quite synching with the melodies. It all seemed a bit off kilter, but after a few listens it became more cohesive (as I find this the case when listening to more complex and unusual music). —Camille Reynolds (Make-That-A-Take, makethatatatarecords.bandcamp.com / Black Lake / The Ghost Is Clear / Boslevan)

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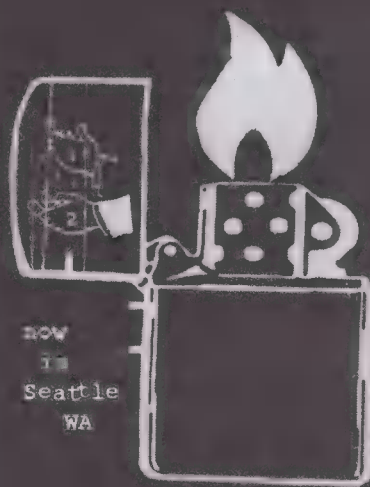
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Kennedy's ■ sides stolen from airport luggage claim or could be the collected nightmares of Devo robbed from the very men as they slept. All we know is Kill The Hippies have been crafting the weird shit out in Cleveland for many moons now, and good listeners make good songwriters. There's something for everyone here—the swagger of "Mustache," the wild bass lines of "Dance Control"—the rest burns along mighty fine. —Jim Joyce (Phoenician Micro-Systems)

KIMBERLY STEAKS, THE: *To Live and Die in Central Scotland*: LP

Harkens back to the '90s when every band and their grandparents were wearing oversized cargo shorts and writing forced-rhyme lamentations about ex-girlfriends to the same three chords. And yet—surprise, surprise—in spite of the potential pitfalls, *To Live and Die...* manages to come across as fresh and relevant. While the band would've been right at home doing singles on Mutant Pop or Rhetoric (the Scared Of Chaka cover is pretty indicative), there's something about this LP that avoids sounding outdated and just comes across as fun as shit. Pop punk often times gets ■ bad rap, and has long been synonymous with words like predictability, vapidity, and saccharine cuteness—but the Kimberly Steaks manage to avoid all that stuff. Sure, maybe it sounds like some bands we've heard before, but if that's the case, it's been ■ long time since I've heard ■ band do it this well,

this exuberantly. The only downside's ■ lack of lyric sheet. It'd be nice to know specifically what these guys are crowing about. Still, recommended. —Keith Rosson (All In)

KLITZ, THE: *Sounds of Memphis '78*: 7"

First archival release of The Klitz *Sounds of '78*, recorded in one three-hour session during the summer of '78. The Klitz existed from '78 to '80 but never released anything as a band... until now. Considered as one of Memphis's first punk bands, this is a lo-fi charmer with raw, bare bones guitar, bass, and drums. "Two Chords" is ■ perfect example with ■ two-chord progression and lyrics such ■ "two chords /going out of my mind!" Because all you fucking need is two chords, dammit. Gail Clifton's vox on "Hard Up" are some of the most delicious vocals I've ever heard—fresh and unapologetic. Everything from the rhythm section, to the raw, amateurish vocals, and simplistic guitar feels like it might just fall apart at any time. Always teetering back and forth—lags, drags, picks up—this ultimately adds to this hot, perfect mess. Five hundred pressed. Get it. —Camille Reynolds (Spacecase, spacecaserecords.com)

KUKEN: *Black* ■ 7"

Given the odd white lettering on black background that comprises the cover, this could've gone any number of ways. Turns out we've got ourselves here a German band that sounds tailor-made for Dirtnap's stable of bands.

Two tunes of infectious thud-punk, beefy without being meatheaded, both of 'em winners. Fuck yeah. —Jimmy Alvarado (Bachelor)

LAWAGON: *Hang*: LP

I admit I never really jumped on the Lawagon... but right off the bat I'm enjoying this record, which opens with ■ short, sorrowful acoustic number by the name of "Burden of Proof" that then busts loose into fast paced rocker "Reign." The opening is so strong. Unfortunately, the rest of the songs are kinda ■ wash. The vocals and guitar tone are the sounds of contemporary hard rock. Not my jam. —Jackie Rusted (Fat Wreck Chords, fatwreck.com)

LAWAGON: *Hang*: CD

Although I was ■ bit surprised by the album start (just acoustic), I should not have been worried. The unholy riffage and speedy rhythms came in right on time on the second song. Having only seen Joey Cape with Me First And The Gimme Gimmes, I wasn't sure what to expect. But I was pleasantly surprised. "The Cog in the Machine" and "In Your Wake" really bring some blistering tuneage to the table. "One More Song" is dedicated to Tony Sly and it is certainly heartfelt. So if this is first release by this band to make it into your rack, then you should have some earplugs handy. It is chock full of rainbow sprinkle awesomeness. —Sean Koeppenick (Fat Wreck, lawagon.com)

LEAGUES APART: *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*: LP

In a community the size of punk, it's often easy to peg ■ band's geographical homebase, even without paying attention to potential accents. Leagues Apart jumped out as British almost immediately, despite the fact that they would sit easily on any label from Tampa, San Diego, or Gainesville. The songs ■ almost instantly familiar in an inviting way, warm like the climate of aforementioned locales. The Brit comes across in the short acoustic break of "I Consider John Candy to be ■ Noir Actor" and the Iron Maiden tone at the beginning of "Rampant Horse Is Rampant." Leagues Apart will have you raising ■ proper pint while reminiscing about your first Fest experience. Into it. —Matt Seward (All In Vinyl, allinvinyl.com)

LEBAKKO: *Elävien Kuolneiden Yö*: LP

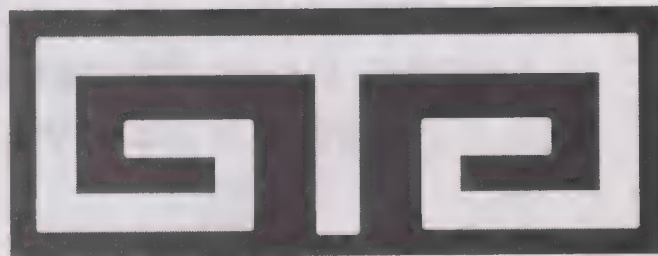
Tough one to pin down. I mean, really, I have no reference points that seem quite apt, which is frustrating as hell. Four Finnish dudes doing a jangly, almost mathy, almost post-punk thing with warbling vocal melodies and confident, concise musicianship. Clean guitars and odd structures. Hüsker Dü meets... Minus The Bear? The last song on the record's ■ precise, sped-up little instrumental number that's layered with a spaced-out guitar solo; it works flawlessly, is over way too soon, and serves as a brilliant closer to the album. Definitely ■ interesting band. —Keith Rosson (PML)

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The Fiction Junkies "Morbidly Obtuse" EP/CD
Frank and Earnest "Modern Country" CD
Cave Needles self-titled CD

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LILITH VELKOR: Lone: LP

Sweaty, gritty, and ominous, this is almost-grunge, an album sandwiched somewhere between Sonic Youth and the Meat Puppets. It's sometimes unnerving, a quality that on some songs leans into becoming just brazenly irritating. I'm strongly reminded of old "alternative" bands like Overwhelming Colorfast and Gumball, but with every ounce of gloss sanded off and plenty of barbs and rivets showing. Like I said, much of it is pretty trying but they do a solid job of channeling a certain damaged kind of pop sensibility, running it through their own sonic rock tumbler, and, at their best, threading their songs with a palpable sense of unease. —Keith Rosson (Starcleaner)

LOPEZ, THE: Travel Fast: Cassette

I literally heard the first blown-out guitar note and said, "Okay, this." I'll admit that my fuzz-overload garage rock prediction ended up being a little off the mark (fuzz-overload was dead-on, though). Noise pop is a better fit for this duo, who will probably be a hit with those who like their rock weird, snotty, and buried under a haze of flanging feedback and distortion. The programmed drums are a cool twist that I don't hear too often. Not really my scene, so tracks like "Cubito Aequet" that let the pop hooks out for some air are the only ones that don't sound like a robot speaking internet rock to me. Like I said, though, this sounds like a solid release for the right audience. —Indiana Laub (Machine Age, inthemachineage.com)

LOSS, THE: Last Rites: 7"

This five piece from Seattle has that "it" factor that people talk about, yet can't ever seem to wrangle it for themselves. It's something that is so easily recognizable when it's right. From the moment I first heard them, I was submerged in feelings of bliss mixed with shades of sadness. But it's that deep kind of sadness that you only notice in people who have also experienced severe loss. They make me feel the true definition of melancholia blended with hope and elation. Extreme feelings and rad tunes, to boot. As a genre, they're very melodic hardcore—rapid, high intensity drumming with despondent guitar harmonies, gruff vocals, and pop punk "whoa-ohs." My favorite song is the first track on this EP, "Domestic Relief," with choruses of "We are the children of broken homes / But we hide ourselves." Gives me fucking chills every fucking time. These guys are serious, experienced, and finely tuned. They're a tight, well oiled machine. And, sadly, they're no longer with us, but at least they left this behind before they split up. Definitely a top ten band of all time for me. Pick this one up. —Kayla Greet (La Escalera)

LOST WARNING: Never Surrender: EP

Generic "street punk" that sounds heavily influenced by all that garbage from the 1990s. Somewhere between Rancid and the Unseen. Not good company. —M.Avrq (Switchlight, switchlight-records.com)

LOW DERIVE: Keto: 7"

I'd been playing this record intermittently over a lengthy period before I realized how good it actually was. However, once that eureka moment hit, I quickly became enamored with the three tracks—especially the opener, "Dylarama"—which builds gradually before bursting open into a hugely melodic romp that falls just short of five minutes. These Italians write some great intros, bridges, and outros—which are almost worth listening to in isolation—however, they manage to throw in some decent vocal passages to help build up three very strong songs. The guitar sound owes a debt to Dickie Hammond (Leatherface/H.D.Q.) and it helps beef up the record nicely. A real shame I couldn't catch the band on its recent U.K. tour. —Rich Cocksedge (No Reason, noreasonrecords.blogspot.it)

LUICIDAL: Self-titled: CD

In case you couldn't tell by the vato with the flipped-up bill stale-fish grabbing his bass guitar on the cover of this CD, this is in fact a band associated with Suicidal Tendencies and named by and after founding member Louichi Mayorga. Luicidal also features the participation of former ST alums Rocky George, R.J. Herrera, Grant Estes, Amery Smith, and special guest H.R. of the Bad—I mean—Soul Brains. Musically, it's nothing earth shattering: straight forward punk and hardcore with glimpses of their ST roots and its various incarnations (thrash, metal,

skate). Thank fucking god there are no traces to be heard of that horrific Infectious Grooves funk-metal style, which, come to think of it, might have something to do with the omission of Mike Muir's presence on this disc. If I were to catch these guys opening up for someone, I might be inclined to tap my toe and nod my head in approval but that's probably as far as my efforts would allow to see them perform live. Fun fact: I used to work with the nephew of one of Luicidal's members. I often caught him sleeping on top of three strategically placed chairs in the break room and sometimes he'd regale me with stories about how he'd get blackout drunk at a bar and have no recollection of the fist fights he involved himself in. —Juan Espinosa (DC Jam, dcjamrecords.com, luicidal.com)

LYCKA TILL: Rakt over Munnan: LP

Moments like these are among the best musical moments. Moments like these are, maybe, why music and language were invented in the first place. "You are not crazy. You are not alone. There is a lot of fucked up stuff in this world. You aren't the only one who sees it. And, maybe, if the small voice that you are decides to raise a righteous fuss, others will join in with you." These are the comforting thoughts that I had while listening to Sweden's folk-punk act Lycka Till's album, *Rakt over Munnan*. My great grandfather was born in Sweden, but I didn't know what

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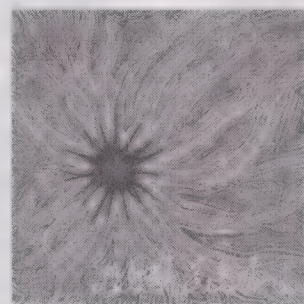
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the fuck these people were singing about until I found the photocopied zine inside the record with beautiful, rebellious lyrics in English and a group of punks carrying a banner that translated, "Norrland Against Racism." Here in the United States, people are still in shock, still organizing, still facing the consequences of speaking out against killer cops in Ferguson, Missouri and Staten Island, New York. It was the perfect night to discover this record and hear that, in anger and frustration at the senseless violence laid upon the people by the powers that be, we are not crazy. We are not alone. —John Mule (Dragabang)

MANDATES, THE: *Suspicion: 7"*

Western Canada for the win. The newest offering from Calgary's Mandates is another blast of upbeat, faster New York Dolls-style glam/punk. It would be difficult to track down another band with comparable musicianship; these guys are pros. "Suspicion" is catchy and filled with slick guitar licks, without overdoing it. "Wasting Time," the flipside, is reminiscent of The Barracudas recent work. Can't say enough great things about these guys. —Steve Adamyk (Teenage Rampage, teenagerampagerecords.com)

MANTS, THE: *Destroyed by Fuzz: 7" EP*

The world is on fire and crumbling yet here are three guys pretending to be half-man, half-ant creatures talking about unleashing a "fuzz ray" at your retro beach party. Take that for whatever

it is, but the real issue is some flat, self-referential songs that never rise above the shtick. Within the micro-genre that might be called "costume garage" this falls well short of The Mummies and Servotron. For the B-movie trivia buffs and Hawaiian shirt people only. —Matt Werts (Manglor, themants.com)

MERIDIAN: *The Cathedral: LP*

Though I'm predisposed to like anything rootsy and jangly, Meridian's banjo- and piano-infused "existential crisis you can sing along to" would have been up my alley even if it wasn't composed by Signals Midwest's Max Stern, who possesses the supernatural ability to punch me right in the feels. This filled-out full-length is a follow-up to 2012's stripped-down *Aging Truths* LP. Its eight heartrending tracks feature full band instrumentation that includes cello, trumpet, and trombone. Though all of its selections skip along with the same flavor of nostalgic whimsy, the first, the opening, titular track required nearly twenty repeats before I could bear to part with it and listen to the remainder of the record. The charming imperfections of Stern's trademark vocal melodies and lyrics communicate the earnestness of his passion and force me to reflect on my own lost loves with a teenaged yearning. The Youth Conspiracy-distributed vinyl LP is limited to five hundred. My CD came with a handwritten note from Stern, thanking me for my support and expressing a genuine enthusiasm about eventually touring through my neck of

the woods. If this sweet gesture and the depth of emotion on *The Cathedral* are any indication, Max's—and his brother and collaborator Jacob's—barebones live show will be a moving and personal affair that I cannot wait to witness. —Kelley O'Death (Youth Conspiracy, info@youthconspiracyrecords.com, youthconspiracy.bigcartel.com)

MIDNIGHT CRISIS: *Self-titled: 7" EP*

Gallop-tempoed Finnish hardcore, very reminiscent of the stuff that came out of that area in the very early '80s, albeit with considerably cleaner production. Not as intense in delivery as I'm partial to, but on the whole they ain't too shabby. —Jimmy Alvarado (Rinderherz, rinderherzrecords.ch)

MIDNIGHT PLUS ONE: *"Like Camera" b/w "White Flowers": 7"*

Midnight Plus One is salt-pysch-drenched, surfy, post-punk, which I personally love. What really makes it shine is the simple, beautiful guitar shimmering atop—both fluid and simultaneously bound tight. Frontwoman Casey Cooks reminds me of Katie Alice Glass from the Priests, albeit softer and more refined. Both songs "Like Camera" and "White Flowers" start out with a subtle throb that builds, progresses, and then spills over into a full out jam. This is my first introduction to Midnight Plus One, so I'm not familiar their song layouts, but I find this incredibly satisfying. Solid. Part of a Singles Club release from North Carolina label Negative Fun. —Camille Reynolds (Negative Fun)

MISCALCULATIONS: *Self-titled: LP*

Working from a taught thud-punk core that sometimes comes off like a cleaner sounding Spits (the guitars sound like they're coming out of tiny, cheap practice amps), they make otherwise simple song structures a bit more nuanced by adding an almost new wavy sense of dislocation to the delivery. They keep the songs short 'n' to the point, punchy, and puissant. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dead Beat)

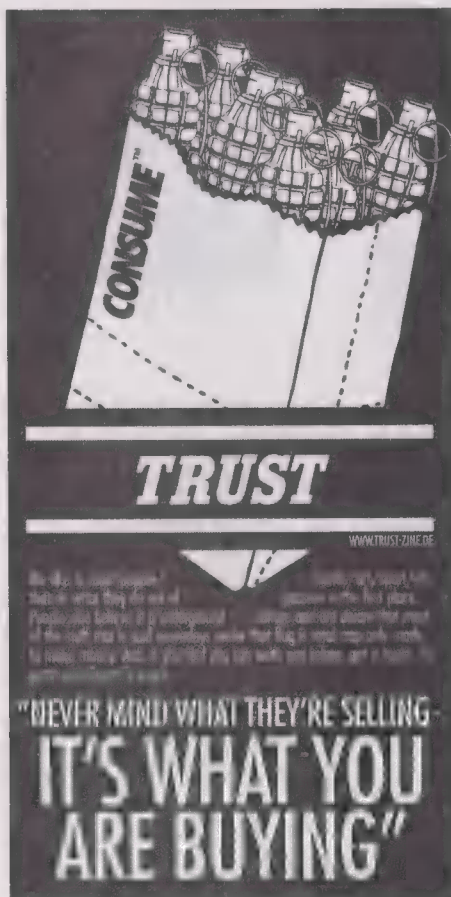
MISS DESTINY: *House of W: 7"*

Hozac (or Horizontal Action) has easily been one of the most-purchased record labels throughout my collection in the last five years. Now a complete staple of Chicago's underground, Todd Novak knows what he's doing. In walks Miss Destiny, a four piece from Australia, representing the love affair for bands Down Under in the past decade. Thankfully, this single landed in my lap before year-end lists have even been a twinkle in my eye, because this debut will likely be on it. The flipside, "The One," is out-of-control good. Just open your web browser, Google all the above info, and check out a stream for this track. Seriously, just do it. Now. Great (mid range) female vox over upbeat garage pop. The guitar tone is perfect—gritty and dissident. Looking forward to hearing more. —Steve Adamyk (Hozac)

MÖBIUS STRIP:

Palabras Podridas: 7" EP

From the chunky bass sound, to their sharply political but tongue-



in-cheek lyrics, everything I loved about their previous 7" *Step Down* is present on this follow-up. On this outing, the DC-based trio brings four new tracks—great new additions to the band's catalog—but the opening track "Chemicals," is my favorite. Its strong hooks capture the witty lyricism of the band at their most biting and feature some of my favorite riffs of any of their songs. I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that the closing track, "IG-88," is not only a rad instrumental track that allows the band to flex their musical chops, but the title is also a sweet Star Wars reference. Recorded at Inner Ear Studios with Don Zientara—possibly in the same recording session as their previous EP—these tracks have the pristine recording quality we'd expect from such a pedigree. It's December as I'm writing this, and this 7" has definitely snuck into my top ten releases of the year. —Paul J. Comeau (Crooked Beat, band@mobiustripdc.com crookedbeat@crookedbeat.com)

MONSIEURS, THE: Self-titled: CD

All the pictures show a three-piece band: vocals, drums, and guitar. But I can only hear one instrument when I push play: fuzz. The Monsieus are masters of fuzz. They manipulate it the way a sculptor manipulates clay. Perhaps that analogy isn't quite accurate, because it makes it sound as if The Monsieus are making fine art. While it's true that they are fuzz-

masters and are well versed in the ~~nuances~~ of fuzz, their intention seems to be stomping, fuzzed-out destruction. They don't want you to hear their fuzz and say, "Oh, what nice fuzz!" They want to infect you with their fuzz. They want to shove their fuzz down your throat until your head explodes and their fuzz is glazed with your brain meat. And you will be thankful for it. —MP Johnson (Black Gladiator)

MOTHER OF SORROWS: II: CD

When the weather in Boston is nice, sometimes there is an older, slightly disheveled street musician in front of the public library playing a keyboard. It often sounds futuristic and also has a steady, kickin' beat. Almost all of it is pre-programmed and he just hits a few keys here and there. I kind of dig it, and if I weren't always in such a hurry I'd stop and listen. There were times on this CD that I felt like I was listening to that guy play, except this is a two-person act (featuring Kronos and Jupiter Skab) with vocals and their sound is more goth than that dude in front of the library. I like hearing that guy jam, while in contrast some of the songs on *II* were so excruciating that I was convinced this almost had to be a joke. It wasn't helped by the fact that the lyrics have something to do with someone named Zorgon: "Zorgon calls your soul," "The loneliness of Zorgon," and "Zorgon promised me the future." This is a joke, right? —Kurt Morris (56th Street)

MOTHER'S CHILDREN: Lemon: LP

Although the first song sounds like some little glam fucks trying to work out long-standing issues regarding white guilt over "Talk Dirty to Me" Poison appreciation, everything else sounds like a glorious, full-bodied upturning of the *Guitar Romantic* appellation ((minus the tininess and the glue-sniffing)), a soaring, flannel-shirted revisiting of the Yum-Yums canon ((minus all the girls)), a savvy older brother handing down banned medical tracts to Ramma Lamma ((minus the cartooniness)), power pop and glam and punk and rock and roll and sometimes you just gotta tip your toque to the excellence of execution, ya know? Earth might have been a better planet if this was the second Generation X album instead of *Valley of the Dolls*, mightn't it? I kind of can't think of anything I don't like about this record, except that all the lemons on the back cover are making me hungry for fish. As far as I'm concerned, this band is so good that they should make Ottawa the new capital of Canada! BEST SONG: "Helen Mustn't Know," maybe. BEST SONG TITLE: "Helen Mustn't Know," certainly. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: This album appears to have been pressed up in a number of different countries, and the front cover art is grey and yellow for some countries and aqua and yellow for others. —Rev. Nørb (Taken By Surprise, takenbysurprise.net)


NAPALMPOM: The Unconditional Love of Napalmpom: LP

Teenage Rampage Records is really blasting off with a bang, considering the quality of its first few releases. Canada's west coast has always been better than the rest of the country at this game. Think Von Zipper, The Black Halos, and pretty much every group from Vancouver. I'm not sure if it's the crude oil from the tar sands in the water or what, but it's undeniable. Napalmpom play rock and roll, the Calgarian way. Progressive, loud rock with hints of indulgence and maybe even indie rock, but I couldn't mean that in a better way. It's the many layers of parts musical slices that keep this record great. I'm sold. Sign me up for the long haul. —Steve Adamyk (Teenage Rampage, teenagerampagerecords.com)

NEIGHBORHOOD BRATS: Recovery: LP


It's a pretty amazing thing to see a band that you really like continue to grow and continue to sound rad while doing it. The day I received the first Neighborhood Brats EP in my review materials my life changed for the better. Angry, visceral, and barely in control, it dominated my stereo for a long time. Over the next few singles, the changes weren't all that noticeable but with *Recovery* the Brats are showing some change. Don't get me wrong, the seething temperament is still there. The feeling that everything could explode at any minute? Check. It's in the delivery. The vitriol is laser

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pointed now. Everything is tightened up and focused. Is this the moment where a great band becomes one of the greatest bands? I believe it is. Easily ■ top record for 2014 for me. —Ty Stranglehold (Deranged)

NEW JUNK CITY: Self-titled: LP

Have you ever wanted a soundtrack to ■ cocksure, fuck-off day? The type of day where everything seems to fall into place. You wake up and glance at the mirror and think, "Damn, I look halfway decent." You receive too much change from the liquor store attendant while shoplifted trail mix is in your hoodie pocket. Your nagging coworker is out sick with mono so you have free rein over their office supplies. If so, here are seven confident punk songs from four Georgians who breathe life into tired power chords. The singer has refined strained punk shouts into soulful, gritty sincerity. When he pushes his voice to the limits, you're compelled to do the same. All the while, the twangy, intricate guitars tango with hard-hitting percussive beats. New Junk City strikes a balance between rawness ("I don't love you like I used to") and resiliency ("Trying to make it out of this one-horse town"). It's been ■ while since I've felt this much heart in a record, let alone on a debut LP. Let's hope these dudes can keep it up, because I'm anxiously anticipating their next release. Highly recommended. —Sean Arenas (No Breaks, order@nobreaksrecords.com)

NICK OLIVERI'S UNCONTROLLABLE: Leave Me Alone: CD

Ugh. Starts with the sound of a revving motorcycle and just gets shittier from there. Ex-Queens Of The Stone Age bassist creates one of the most painful, indulgent but rock/metal hybrid albums I've ever heard. With or without the requisite guest appearances, this is just cringeworthy. I have no qualms about leaving you alone, Nicholas. —Keith Rosson (Schnitzel)

NO LOVE: Tape # 2: Cassette

Four tracks of Dangerhouse meets U.K. anarcho punk and hardcore. Hookier than the average band who just picked up a Bags record and as volatile as an '80s Conflict gig in East L.A. A second demo isn't necessary when you've already got the chops. No Love, the odds are all in your favor, so do us all ■ solid and drop some vinyl for the punx. —Juan Espinosa (Sorry State, sorrystaterecords.com)

NO MARKS, THE: Light of One: LP/CD

I love it when I put on a new album and from the first few seconds I know it's one I'm going to obsess over. *Light of One* is one of those records, as opening track "16 Questions" wastes no time in providing me with that instant reaction. There is no preamble as it hits full speed immediately with what sounds like ■ waterfall of guitars raining down around me and ■ melody that hooks me in with the promise of much enjoyment to follow. *Light of One* has a joie de vivre about it with

The No Marks racing through fourteen songs, each one being led front and center by a twin guitar attack that doesn't relent—all the time delivering ■ beautifully toned sound that, despite being *loud*, doesn't get in the way of the rest of the band. All of those qualities remind ■ of The Senseless Things, Mega City Four, and The Ceteran, a few of many bands that had the ability to knock me sideways with such ■ uplifting approach. At ■ minimum, this is the best debut album I've heard in 2014 but it might also just edge into my general top ten for the year. —Rich Cocksedge (Brassneck, brassneckrecords.bigcartel.com / Waterslide, info@watersliderecords.com, watersliderecords.com)

NUMBER ONES, THE: Self-titled: LP

Great to finally get to hear this record that I've been hearing so many gush on and on about. Dublin's the Number Ones have found the missing link between the proto-punk of the Nerves and the irresistible charm of the Exploding Hearts. Lending to their already stellar songwriting is the keen ability to keep shit nice and simple behind the control board in the recording studio. Quick! Someone get these lads on ■ plane to the states so they can eat something other than corned beef and so we can pour cheap, ironic American beer down their throats ■ they rock us back to the stone age. Great times await ■ all. —Juan Espinosa (Deranged, derangedrecords.com)

ORCHID: Totality: LP

Always considered these guys part of the Holy Trinity of Screamo, alongside Reversal Of Man and Combat Wounded Veteran, or at least the grandpappies of said genre. Orchid, however, always seemed like the most serious of the three and, at times, the most self-conscious. Loved the music—the sheer ferocity and madness of it—but their lyrics, name-dropping Debord and Foucault and stuff, always seemed like they were trying ■ a bit too hard to either impress or obfuscate. Regardless, they lay waste to all in their path on *Totality*, an LP's worth of long out of print singles and comp tracks. Nice posthumous release for ■ band that split well over ■ decade ago. —Keith Rosson (Clean Plate)

PANIC BEATS, THE:

■ Date with Death: CD

When I first heard the name of this band my eyes lit up. "Panic Beats? Like the Paul Naschy movie?" Yep. In case you don't know, Paul Naschy was ■ Spanish horror movie icon. Then I saw the cover art by the great Bill Hauser depicting a hooded man standing on a woman's doorstep handing her a bouquet of severed body parts. I looked at the track list. The word "kill" appears five times in twelve songs. I'm ■ horror nerd. I eat this shit up. Needless to say, my expectations were high before I even pushed play. And then... oh shit. This is ■ concept album that tells the story of ■ psychotic, knife-wielding stalker through a dozen tracks



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of melodic punk. There are some cool guitar parts. At first, I was turned off by the vocals. They are off key and, well, just off. But then on further listenings, it actually added to the creepiness of the experience. These painfully fucked up vocals trying to sing all heartfelt about slashing people up. It's just wrong but it's just so right. —MP Johnson (Midnight Jamboree, facebook.com/MJR916)

PANZERBASTARD:

Gods, Thugs & Madmen: 10"

Very metal, with Venom being their prime influence, PanzerBastard is popular in metal-friendly portions of crust hardcore circles, due to their undeniable hardcore influences. The lyrics are interesting, with a surprising degree of wit. The metal riffs aren't as obnoxious as some, and the doomy vocals made me smile. Way above average for this musical style, it's a decent foray into the longhair trenches. —Art Ettinger (Patac)

PARTY DRESS, THE: Self-titled: 7"

This is good, simple, lo-fi, garagey rock and roll. It appears to be the first release for Bonzer Records, which has no web presence other than Bandcamp. No sign of a lyrics sheet or band lineup included and the insert from the label advertises records that are coming out in "Srig 2014." Seems like these guys were so eager to release, they forgot to cross their t's and dot their i's. The Party Dress has some solid bass lines and rhythm guitar over

droney rock beats that are a lot like The Cramps but less nostalgic. I like what they're going for, but I wish they'd put more effort into the record. Like: where are you from? Who is in the band? Did you record in a sewer? Cool album art and decent music. I'd be interested in what they put out from here. —Kayla Greet (Bonzer)

PONG: Gone: CD

Seven tracks of smarty-pants funky rock in the vein of say, Gang Of Four meets Talking Heads. Nothing really sticks out from anything else other than the song "Fish Sauce," which annoyed me and captivated me simultaneously. Any band that extols the virtues of fish sauce is ultimately okay in my book. Just don't spill any on your pants, trust me. —Garrett Barnwell (Sautext, sautext.com)

POSITIVE NO: Automatic Cars: 7"

Odd change-ups keep you on your toes on this single. Positive No's EP is a release off of Negative Fun's Singles Club, a label out of North Carolina, in a series with Bad Daddies, Hot Dolphin, Midnight Plus One, and Positive No. The vocals undoubtedly sound like Björk, and even the song title and chorus ("Automatic Cars") on Side A sounds like an oddball topic that Björk herself might sing about. With a bit of controlled chaos and noise here, a bit of a disco beat drumming there, and a whole lot of bass drumming all over, Positive No creates a unique sound all their own. B-sides "Slumber Sequence"

is notably less odd and a bit sweeter. Keep it coming. —Camille Reynolds (Negative Fun)

PROTES BENGT:

In Bengt W. Trust: 7" EP

Swedish hardcore re-release from '85. Crams thirty-two punchy hardcore jams on to a seven inch slab of vinyl. If you've ever craved a script to Adderall, this gem is guaranteed to give ADD in just under fourteen minutes. —Jackie Rusted (Insane Society, insanesociety.net)

PULLING PUNCHES:

Former Friends: CD

These Philadelphia dudes have a sound that is a very natural complement to the Harsh Realms record I also got for this review cycle, but this one is a spawn of Off With Their Heads and Street Dogs. Pulling Punches are anthemic, angst-ridden, and feisty, with lots of power and melody. It's the kind of music that inspires one just to blast through all the shit and all the burdens heaped upon us and get it done. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Universal Warning)

RAJOITUS / RATSTAB: Split: 7" EP

Rajoitus: Five tracks of vicious Finnish fjordcore coming at you like a hail of angry hornets armed with jackhammers aiming for your forehead. Been a while since I've heard anything from 'em, but based on this, it sounds like they've lost none of their charm. Ratstab: Blown-out, spastic hardcore that, at times,

sounds like someone is howling while banging on the inside of a very heavy, lead barrel. —Jimmy Alvarado (Patac)

RATIONAL ANTHEM:

Emotionally Unavailable: LP

To me, it seems impossible to escape Rational Anthem's name if you're tapped into any kind of DIY punk community, but I haven't followed them as closely as this record suggests I should have been. Eight tracks of irresistibly accessible pop punk that never stops bouncing off the walls from start to finish. It's something like Dear Landlord or Lipstick Homicide, but scuffed up with some of that gangly, rough-and-tumble Plan-It-X-style scrappiness. Listen, if you're trying to forcefully help your little cousin bridge the gap from saccharine corporate pop punk to Real Music, this record is the best possible next step for them to take. As for me, this will probably be in regular rotation once I get over the staggeringly awful artwork, which is of a terrifying scribble guy apparently getting shot down by a lady with Spongebob eyes. Nightmares. —Indiana Laub (Bloated Kat, bloatedkatrecords@gmail.com, bloatedkat.storenvy.com)

RAVAGE FIX: Self-titled: 7" EP

Fuuuuck, these cats are pissed. Four tracks of raw, feral hardcore delivered at varying tempos ranging from thrash to slow, caustic burn. The song structures are simple, but man, do they pack a punch. —Jimmy Alvarado (Rinderherz)



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REAGAN'S POLYP: *Deadenator*: CD

"I felt embarrassed and defensive every time someone ■■■■ in through the living room and saw me watching it. Like I was guilty of something. And I guess I was." —Dave Roche on his first time watching *Pink Flamingos* on a friend's couch. Which I remembered while trying to listen to *Deadenator* while my roommate was in the kitchen making dinner. Two of these tracks come close to sounding like songs. "Rock and Roll 'Music'" —only a song because it's a parody with lyrics like, "Oh yeah / Let's go / It was Saturday night / And I went to a bar / And I put in a quarter / to hear some guitar!" and the track, "Overpowered by the Spacegirl," which "songs" around for a minute or ■ before the drums sound like they're being thrown down the stairs and the yelping begins and doesn't ever really go away. Generally, I support this kind of thing. Very entertaining. A post-holidays gift for someone you used to love? —Jim Joyce (Vetoxa, vetoxa.com)

REAL NUMBERS:

What Is It? What Is: CD

Like its predecessor, the latest from these cats stakes out and stripmines the intersection between the Simpletones, Vaselines, and T.V. Personalities—all clean-channel guitars and happy hooks explored at various tempos. Great stuff. —Jimmy Alvarado (Almost Ready)

REBEL SPELL, THE: *Last Run*: CD

I have been ■ fan of Vancouver's Rebel Spell since the very beginning. They

are such a unique band that brings together a lot of elements to conjure up something genuinely special. I am hard pressed to think of another current band out there who sounds like them. *Last Run* continues along the trajectory set forth by previous albums. Huge anthems that are, on one hand, very catchy and make you want to get up and move, and, on the other hand, incredibly thoughtful and introspective. Politics are at the forefront and it's nice to hear serious protest music that is also fun to listen to. Rebel Spell tour North America a lot. If you get ■ chance, you should really get out and see them. They're great live. —Ty Stranglehold (Not Yer Buddy, facebook.com/Not.Yer.Buddy)

RESENT: *Self-titled*: 7"

Technical post-hardcore from Austin, Texas. Not normally my thing, but I can appreciate the quality of the product and the tunes overall. Throwback ten years or so and these guys could be on Three One G. —Steve Adamyk (Vermin Resplendence, resentpunx.com)

REV. NORB ■ THE ONIONS:

Self-titled: LP

Bouncy, intentionally stupid power chord punk, the kind with a ton of rock'n'roll solos and goofy lyrics delivered in boppin' post-Ramones style. The usual tropes are there, for those keeping track at home: teenager problems, needing to be medicated, sci-fi conspiracies, B-movie monsters, etc. I can't lie, this kind of tongue-in-

cheek band always just seems like a novelty to me—but hey, you don't see anyone asking me how to get invited to parties. —Indiana Laub (Certified PR, thickbootyhos@yahoo.com, certifiedprrecords.com)

RICKY C QUARTET, THE:

Recent Affairs: LP

This LP contains rock-inspired punk. At times, punk-inspired rock. The singer sounds a bit like the singer from The Saints. The guitars are low distortion and feature lots of Chuck Berry riffs in the vein of '77 New York bands. "Rock the Boat" utilizes ■ saxophone nicely. The saxophone occasionally pushes the sound to the Jersey shore. I think this album is more for the older crowd, but that's me and I like it. —Billups Allen (Wanda, wandarecords.de)

ROCKET ■ *Burn*: CD

Rocket 3 is dreamy sugar pop with a Portland sound. They remind me of a montage of tidbit songs in *Portlandia*: ■ mix of Breeders and the Shangri-Las, and sweet, subdued Stereolab-style vocals. The drums roll along, punchy yet light. The guitar is charmingly simplistic, which adds to the band's soft-flowing sound. There are three covers: "Submission" (Sex Pistols), "All Tomorrows Parties" (the Velvet Underground) and "Only Shallow" (My Bloody Valentine), which, I think, are unnecessary. Rocket 3 put their own sound into each of these songs, which I don't think does any

justice to the songs nor the band. —Camille Reynolds (Self-released, reverbnation.com/ramune)

ROSELIT BONE: *Blacken ■ Curl*: LP

Bring on the desert. *Blacken & Curl* is a Spaghetti Western record complete with stenciled artwork of a desert range. If you love old country and bands like Spindrift, The Starvations, Fresh & Onlys, and Old Crow Medicine Show, you need to hear these guys. One of the things I really like about this record is that the band didn't half-ass it instrumentally. There is ■ nice range of instruments on this record: cello, violin, trumpet, and plenty of acoustic guitars. They keep the themes consistent with the art, music style, and song titles. —Ryan Nichols (Self-released)

ROTTEN UK: *Bat Shit Crazy*: 7" EP

This is the second 7" from the hilarious, ripping Rotten UK. Part joke band ■ la Who Killed Spike? and part devout reenactment of the best of UK82 hardcore, Rotten UK is from Rochester, U.K., a.k.a. Western New York. Cerebral, intelligently inane, and an all-around hoot, the lyrics cover pressing punk issues like bestiality, Christian baiting, and chaos. Even better than their debut record, this is ■ 7" that won't be forgotten. 82 copies come on colored vinyl, the first 30 thirty come with a large bat earring, and the next 77 come with a smaller bat earring. Fun for both those living the life and those standing

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on the sidelines, this record is the perfect balance of kitsch and reality. —Art Ettinger (Disillusioned, rottenuk. bandcamp.com)

SEB AND THE RHAA DICKS:

Self-titled: CD

Seb And The Rhaa Dicks, according to the liner notes, is a project led by Seb Radix of Lyon, France. I saw Seb open for Mike Watt And The Secondmen at Permanent Records a few months back and he, with a tape-recorded drum beat and acoustic guitar, put on one hell of a punk show. Even for that tiny space, divided by racks of CDs and vinyl, he ran up and down the aisles, singing, dancing, and pretending to punch his male listeners in the testicles. It was a great and memorable show, even before three legendary Mike Watt plugged in to play. The songs recorded here have a lot of bop and pop to them, reminiscent of The Modern Lovers or The Buzzcocks. I get the idea that Seb spends most of his time in Europe, but I will be certain to look for his future releases and chances to see him live. —John Mule (Pure Pain Sugar, purepainsugar.blogspot.com / R'n'R Masturbation)

SHARKPACT: Run: LP

Sharkpact is Camille and Jeff, a keyboard/drums duo from Olympia, WA, who inhabits the same scene as RVIVR, Dogjaw, and Prank War. It would be grossly reductive to say that Sharkpact is pop punk with a keyboard, as the keys could not be replaced with power chords. Instead, their vocals

gleefully burst forth, harmonizing with the synth in ways impossible to guitar-wielding punk bands. I'm reminded of Kiwi's uplifting inflections, but challenging anarchist politics: "I was taught class by the smell of a laundromat." Each song is food for thought, yet even without glancing at the lyrics, *Run* is still perfect boogie music. Sharkpact makes me want to pedal my ass off on my bike until I'm drenched in sweat and self-realization: Sure, it's great to be alive, but make your life count for something. —Sean Arenas (Ditches, ditchrecords.com / Starcleaner, starcleaner.com / Rumbletowne, rumbletowne.com)

SHITTY NIGHTS:

Rick Kid Jokes: Cassette

I've always thought the term "street punk" was a euphemism for "shitty, unrehearsed band." This tape reminds me this sort of thing can be done well. I can't tell if it's intentional or not, but there's a great whiff of '80s U.K. in this tape. Sometimes a great recording has a mojo to it where it seems like it could all fall apart at the seams. That's where the urgency in punk lies. It's not just being loud and/or obnoxious. This band either gets it, or is so cool they don't have to. The riffs are simple, mid tempo, and pissed as hell. They bring to mind an angrier Vice Squad. "Fuck It I'm Trying" is an anthem quality song. Get it and put it on in your car. Good tape. —Billups Allen (Let's Go Do Some Crimes, letgodosomecrimes.com)

SICK THOUGHTS:

Terminal Teenage: LP

Two LPs, ten 7"s, and a 10" all released in the course of less than two years?! This is either the work of a madman hell-bent on prolificacy, or a teenager with absolutely nothing better to do than crank out a jaw-dropping amount of blown-out, lo-fi, bedroom-style garage punk. While the madman title has yet to be confirmed or denied, Sick Thoughts is in fact the work of local Baltimore teenager Drew Owen. It's abrasive, it's harsh, it's punk. Rootsy and primal, if you want something raw this will satisfy. Angry and alienated, desperate for reason, this is a journey into the mind of a frustrated, lonely teenager. All too relatable. —Daryl (Dead Beat)

SIN 34. Do You Feel Safe?: CD

Yup, you read that right, kids, the album it was once alleged would never see a legitimate reissue has been re-released. For those not familiar with the band, Sin 34 was a unit active on L.A.'s Westside in the early '80s (and for a time in the '00s/'10s with the original lineup intact) that was notable for a) being one of only a handful in the early American hardcore scene to feature a woman on vocals; b) counting Dave Markey (half of the *We Got Power* fanzine brain trust and a noted filmmaker) among their ranks; c) being one of the legion of bands that Circle One guitarist Mike Vallejo was in (though not for this recording), for those playing the wildly popular

"Six Degrees of Mike" game that is sweeping the underground. This is the band's sole long-form outing released when they were still active, a perennial inclusion on assorted want-lists and a bit of a classic, I reckon, of its type. If you're looking for the artsy weirdness of Butthole Surfers, the taut funky-punk of the Minutemen, or even the mind-bogglingly complex speed-trials of Die Kreuzen, you're barking up the wrong tree here. Sonically, their palette was solidly of the sloppy, occasionally generic thrash variety, more in line with early Wasted Youth than any of those others, with less emphasis on how much Reagan sucked and on more personal issues, peppered throughout with enough humor to keep things interesting. I fully know it's a bit of an acquired taste for those looking for more sophisticated fare, but I've had a soft spot for 'em since this was originally released, so it's nice to see this get another go-round. While the inclusion of the *Die Laughing* EP and assorted comp tracks would've been aces, the three outtakes that are tacked on here are definitely a welcome surprise, as are the liner notes penned by Markey, Thurston Moore, and Tobi Vail, respectively, to give the listener some context. —Jimmy Alvarado (Sinister Torch)

SKINNY GENES: Meh: 7"

Skinny Genes skillfully repurposes a traditionally teenage genre for the quarter life crisis or dirty thirty dread, complete with Simpsons references, but

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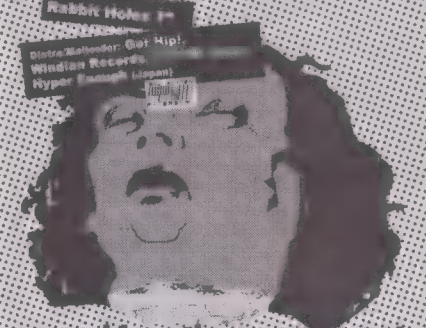
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leaving the pizza and disdain for one's hometown behind. Instead, late twenties anxiety around making it, fitting in, working shitty jobs, and juggling fair weather friends takes over. *Meh* takes the earnest hardcore of New York peers like Iron Chic, ups the pop quotient, and suffuses it with the emotive disaffection of Weezer. Skinny Genes is Azeem "Ace" Sajid, ■ key member of beloved pop punk stalwarts House Boat and The Steinways. On *Meh*, he steps out and literally does it all himself. Ace sings and plays all of the instruments on each track, showcasing his impressive mastery of songwriting. This guy knew exactly what sound he wanted and how to create it, cranking out intelligent bubblegum with ■ wry sense of humor. "Comfortably Dumb" and "No Service" are standout songs, both featuring memorable and reassuring lines like, "I suck at being ■ grownup," and, "Should have known I'd fuck it up somehow." I hear influences from the Lookout! Records portfolio here, particularly the Queers. *Meh* moves at ■ obscenely fast clip, gripping the listener's attention with urgency. It's as if this record was made by ■ otherwise milquetoast nerd guy who is accustomed to bottling up his emotions, but one day, he just couldn't take the wage grind anymore and walked into the studio. This is a perfect record for getting oneself out of self-doubt fog on a shitty day, and I look forward to hearing whatever Ace churns out next. —Claire Palermo (Bloated Kat, bloatedkatrecords@gmail.com, bloatedkatrecords.bandcamp.com)

SNOOZER: Cottage Cheese: Cassette
I suspect it's going to be hard to separate this band from Sunny Day Real Estate— and, through transitive property, from emo—because of the singer's vocals, which share Jeremy Enigk's high pitch and inflection. It's ■ shame if listeners do fall into this trap, because Snoozer is ■ band worthy of repeated listens. There are traces of late '90s indie stuff like Built To Spill throughout. The last song is an epic sprawl, with finger-picked segments leading the way to bombast and release. I'm not crazy about the recording of this one: it flattens the band's attack and renders some potentially ass-kicking passages fangless. Still, ■ band with ideas and execution who probably kill live. —Michael T. Fournier (Ranch, ranchrecords.bigcartel.com)

SOUNDS OF THREAT: Creature of Habit: CD
Las Vegas, Nevada: desert city that obliterates energy resources, water resources, wallets, lungs, livers, and laws. Its only historical redeeming quality being the genesis of criminally overlooked punk band M.I.A. I hold ■ deep loathing for Las Vegas and its stale, dry, nosebleed-inducing forced air. Yet I visit annually, fourteen years running, for P.R.B. Glutton for punishment? Hardly. Just can't resist competitive bowling (2010 champ!) and the great bands that B.Y.O. continually gets to play the thing. Anyway, there are apparently native Las Vegas punk bands, and Sounds Of Threat is one of

them. Solid, straightforward punk rock, kind of reminiscent of the Randumbs, played as fast and loose as punks at ■ Blackjack table at 3:00 AM. So, yes, there is something for all the Vegas punx the other 361 days a year. —Chad Williams (Squidhat, squidhatrecords.com, info@squidhatrecords.com)

SPACE RAFT: Self-titled: LP/CD
Revamped '70s pop rock. Has ■■ thinking Elephant Six takes on Harry Nilsson. The record is accessible with pop rock sounds and middling amounts of '90s alt power pop and, of course, touches of psychedelic pop. It stays pretty clean, getting dusty here and there, but still clean. Except for one ill-advised dingy track on the back. Sounded like a bad take on ■ Sabbath song. Like an Elephant Six band trying to interpret Nilsson covering Sabbath. Ambitious, but it just doesn't work. Like I was saying, nothing offensive outside of that faux pas. File under Barista Rock? —Vincent (Dusty Medical / Bachelor)

STELLA: Big Table No People: Cassette
If you like a good deal of melody in your music, you might not like this tape. That said, if you are getting ready to rob a bank and need to get psyched up, this could be just the thing. Skilled, calculated, dissonant. —Bianca (New Village Tapes, newvillagetapes.com)

STICKERS: Swollen: LP
Swollen is the debut from the band Stickers, from Seattle, who waste no

time in presenting ■ early '80s U.K. post-punk vibe on this LP. Vocally, I'm taken back in an Au Pairs meets ■ howling Jeffrey Lee Pierce kind of way while musically I'm hearing more of ■ Wire/Gang Of Four influence, heavy on the low end with a plodding whirlwind of bass and guitars with ■ occasional skronk from ■ saxophone. On first listen I didn't really "get it," but with repeated listens it keeps getting better and better. —Mark Twistworthy (End Of Time, endoftimerecords.com)


STORMTROOPER: I'm ■ Mess: 7" + CD
Stormtrooper is ■■ of the many proto-punk bands, in this case one from the UK, that perpetually wrench punk-origin timelines and oddly entrenched myths that it popped up out of nowhere. Originally recorded ■ part of a demo in 1975, "I'm a Mess" and its flip, "It's Not Me," the single under scrutiny here was issued in 1977, after the band had ceased to be, no doubt in an attempt to earn ■ few quid off the by-then raging punk phenomenon. The title track is ■ nice bit of sloppy, sludgy stompin', ■ easy fit into punk's confines, while the latter has a bit more of a trad rock vibe to it. Included with this reissue, along with ■ patch, is a CD with additional tracks from the 1975 demo, ■ few tracks from ■ 1978 recording (including ■ nice working of "I'm ■ Fire," released a year later by punk stalwarts Chelsea, which included former Stormtrooper bassist Geoff Myles in its ranks), ■ 2003 rerecording of "I'm a Mess," and a number of tracks pulled from a rehearsal tape tacked on the end

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STRAIGHT ~~DOWN~~ Rising: LP

'60s garage pop expertly executed by these Australians. Bouncy, but not without its freakier moments. This is the soundtrack for the reverb-drenched, black turtleneck lifestyle. If you're a fan of the type of music Hozac has become known to release, you will dig this. —Daryl (Hozac, hozac.com)

SWEET EMPIRE:

Old Ideas Keep Fighting Us: CD/LP

The twenty-eight minutes of music on *Old Ideas Keep Fighting Us* is straight-up pop punk. I totally appreciate Sweet Empire singing about issues such as animal rights, environmentalism, and the war on drugs. But I have to say that it's been a long time since I've heard such generic, dispassionate music where the band is singing about issues that should require some urgency, anger, and fury. Who knows, though—perhaps this message will get through to some kids who wouldn't otherwise listen to hardcore. However, I think I'll stick with the thrash-punk Propagandhi's been doing on their last few albums. It has a political message that speaks to me with an intensity to match. —Kurt Morris (Shield/Gunner)

SWINGIN' UTTERS: *Fistful of Hollow*: LP

I cannot say enough about how much this band has meant to me since I first

heard 1998's *Five Lessons Learned* as a junior in high school. Swingin' Utters have always represented a raw, unapologetic mix of worlds: salty drunks and dignified poets, a working class band with leather jacket-sporting teenage hearts and minds. It has been nearly twenty years since the release of Swingin' Utters' fantastic debut, *The Streets of San Francisco*, and they are still among punk's finest songwriting teams. Guitarist Darius Koski and frontman Johnny "Peebucks" Bonnel have, once again, teamed with One Many Army leader Jack Dalrymple, longtime drummer Greg McEntee, and bassist Miles Peck to produce a punk rock, pub rock, folk punk gem of an album. Long live the Utter Army! —John Mule (Fat Wreck Chords, fatwreck.com)

SYNTHETIC ID: *Escapement*: 7"

This is a really interesting package. The sleeve is made of fancy archival paper and has been splattered with paint. There was also a little strip of paper (not unlike an obi strip) around the record itself that was also paint splattered. There is also some kind of foil wristwatch thing that I am pretty sure is chocolate in the middle. What about the music, you say? Think along the lines of some of that angular, early-'90s Dischord Records stuff and you would be on the right track. By the last song, "Tabula Rasa," I was hooked. This is great stuff! —Ty Stranglehold (Crime On The Moon, crimeonthemoon.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Crash What You Step in Vol. 2: 7"

Nine songs by nine bands—ranging from just about a minute to not quite two minutes in length—this thing is a total tease. Just as you are getting a feel for a song or band, it's over and on to the next band. That being said, this is a very cohesive collection, and punk as fuck. Well done. —Jackie Rusted (48th Avenue Studios, 48thavenuestudios.weebly.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Lux Noise Compilation: CD

I'm a fan of label sampler records; they're usually really cheap, if not free, and I'm introduced to a lot of bands that I would normally have no clue existed. Lux Noise has a pretty good stable of bands represented herein... most fall within the realm of punk'n'roll, or the connections thereto can be relatively easily discerned. There are seven bands with two songs each on this sampler. The record opens with the badass rock'n'roll stylings of the Bitch Queens and R-A-M-S, then turns left with Wolfwolf's minimalistic ghoul rock in the vein of early Cramps. Then the Vibes and Gloria Volt come on to rock your liver with their borderline bar-rock versions of rock with songs about rock, a genre I go gooey over so long as such bands haven't lost their sense of urgency and/or sold out, which neither of these bands seems to have done yet. Then the Jimmy Miller Incident takes the stage in what for me is a dud, with their innocuous brand of blues-infused

warblings. Finally, we finish with Baby Jail, who do this early-'80s new wave-ish rock stuff in German that kind of reminds me of Nina Hagen, but maybe that's just because of the Deutsch. Then it all repeats, presumably in what would be a vinyl B side. Overall, lots of fun. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Lux Noise)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Part Time Punks*

Session Sampler 5:2: CD

Part Time Punks, not to be confused with the T.V. Personalities song that inspired its name, is both a long-running radio program on L.A. radio station KXLU and a long-running series of weekly live gigs showcasing a variety of sounds from the punk/post-punk underground. I've long considered myself a bona fide fan of both, so purchasing this at one of their recent gigs was a no-brainer. Like John Peel's legendary "sessions," PTP records exclusive sessions of assorted bands—according to the PTP website, there have been at least one hundred such recordings made—that are then aired on the show and collected on "samplers," which are used as incentive to donate to the radio station during fund drives, and apparently sold at shows. This is the fifth such sampler, hence the title, and it's a doozy. The sonic sequence this time 'round (and I haven't heard any preceding volumes, so I dunno if there are different themes unique to specific volumes) start off in the dream pop end of the spectrum, then segues into full-on shoegaze stuff, icy synth/synth punk, goth/death rock, indie rock, and

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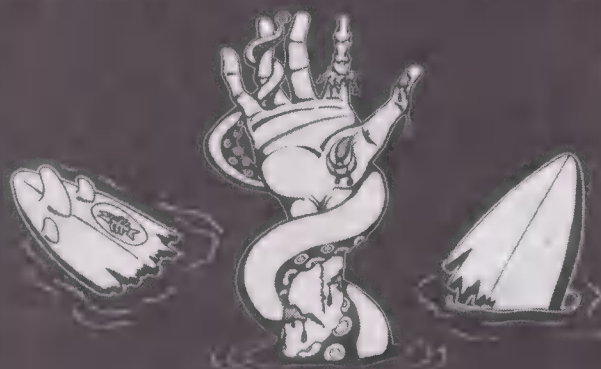
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other loosely related subgenres before closing out with ■ post-punk couplet of Flaamings covering Joy Division's "Transmission" and Manatee covering the Cure's "A Forest." In all you get thirty-eight seriously good tracks by thirty-eight bands, including DIIV, Mac Demarco, ADULT., Seapony, Savages, Black Marble, Surf Club, Medicine, The Wedding Present, Grave Babies, Lebanon Hanover, and many others. I know that "good" is relative depending ■ one's disposition to the ground covered, but I fail to find ■ clunker in the bunch here—the song selection, sequencing, production, and performance are all top-notch. Haven't come across any other volumes yet, but I'm definitely keeping an eye out for 'em, and I highly recommend ye do the same. —Jimmy Alvarado (Part Time Punks, facebook.com/part.punks)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Red Scare Industries: 10 Years ■ Your Dumb Bullshit: CD

Although compilations have become so commonplace now that they seem to have lost some of their luster, this new one is the exception. Toby Jeg commemorates the anniversary of this kick-ass label by offering us this collection. Rare and unreleased goodness from bands you know and love. We all have our favorites, I give thanks for the songs here by Teenage Bottlerocket, the Methadones, and The Lillingtons. Your list will probably be different. But hats off to Toby for keeping it all together this

long and continuing to put out stellar records for the masses. Show your appreciation and pick this one up today. —Sean Koepenick (Red Scare, toby@redscare.net)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Two Way Tia for Last: Cassette

This cassette compilation was released as part of Cassette Store Day, and contains thirty-eight (!) different tracks of punk, garage rock, indie rock, metal, hip-hop, and other genres. There is so much varying stuff here that it's almost exhausting to make sense of it all, in turn making the release have the feel of ■ label sampler with a bunch of random, unconnected bands grouped together. The standout track for me is the catchy ■ fuck "woah-oh-ohs" of Basketball Shorts, but there is likely ■ little something here for everybody. —Mark Twistworthy (Fleeing Youth, fleeingyouth.storenvy.com)

VIBRATORS:

Punk ■■■■ Back to the Roots: CD

I have ■ confession to make: I've never really listened to the Vibrators. For whatever reason, they were one of those bands that underwrite so much of punk rock and simply fell between the cracks for me because I spent my time listening to the bands they inspired. It's kinda like spending one's whole life listening to early Beatles and never listening to Gene Vincent. Shame on me, eh! Regardless, now that I am aware of the gaping void that has been present in my life, at least this record

shovels some dirt back into that hole. The subtitle does not lie: the action here is very much in the vein of early rock'n'roll punk, before politics and blazing speed took over the menu at the banquet. However, since this record pops my proverbial Vibrators cherry, I am in no position to assess its quality in relation to their previous efforts; in actuality this could be the worst Vibrators record in the history of the world, and I would have ■ clue. All I can say is that I've been enjoying my ride on the Vibrators train. Whee! —The Lord Kveldulfr (Cleopatra)

VICIOUS CYCLES MC, THE:

Bad News Travels Fast: LP

To west-coasters, Vancouver's kings of party punk need little introduction. These Albertan and British Columbians have been crushing most of Canada in a number of bands for years; to call them veterans would be ■ understatement. That said, VCMC (not to be confused with the equally Canadian, Vicious Cycle) have made ■ serious impact in their homeland, even for their standards. Apparently, their live set is what they're infamous for and shouldn't be missed, should you get the chance. The music could be best described as biker punk rock, with emphasis on the rock. Not in the realm of flames and tattoos, though. Think chant out loud, singalong, barroom, major key rock. Somewhere along the lines of Dillinger Four meets Stiff Little Fingers—and that's not simply because the opening track begins similarly to "Suspect Device."

It's a ton of fun. Don't miss out. —Steve Adamyk (Teenage Rampage, teenagerampagerecords.com)

WAR/PLAGUE:

Temperaments of War: 7" EP

War/Plague, ■ Minneapolis-based crust band, have created a mini-masterpiece. This song cycle is based on Hippocrates' "Four Humors" and incorporates this philosophy of the four temperaments of health with the songs: "Blood," "Yellow Bile," "Black Bile," and "Phlegm." The *Temperaments of War* is ■ apocalyptic look at imperialism, consumption, and religion and how these things are connected to war. War/Plague uses elements of thrash, crust punk, and down-tuned guitars to create mini-epics of release and tension. One of my favorite moments is the beginning of "Blood," which begins with the drummer pounding out ■ tribal-like beat, using the floor and rack toms that syncopate with the guitars. These moments make my heart race faster and my palms sweaty, which is exactly what I'm looking for in punk music. If you're at all interested in epic crust punk, War/Plague certainly has you covered. —Steve Hart (Organize And Arise, OrganizeandArise.org)

WHEN THERE IS NONE: Warpaint: LP

This one threw me for a loop. Instrumentally, *Warpaint* is a dynamic, emo-tinged indie rock record. Every performance is flawless, from the crisp guitar leads to the driving drums. The production is sparkling. The catch: the

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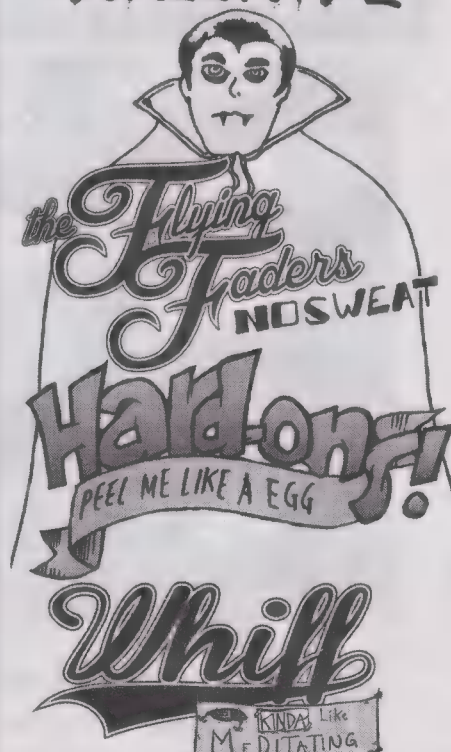
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vocals are delivered in a slurred, off-key rasp that would sound perfectly at home in ■ muddy anarcho outfit. Weird, right? And the arrangement is ■ whole other story—every song culminates in an extended gang vocal chorus that might have been lifted from a pizza-and-beer pop punk basement. This kind of genre mismatch has yielded some of my favorite oddball bands (I'm thinking Comadre, and I'm not surprised to see that Jack Shirley had ■ hand in the production here), but for some reason I just feel like I'm not getting this yet. To the credit of When There Is None, the execution is so thoughtful and meticulous that they make me feel like it's my fault. Like, this artwork is beautiful, the lyrics are lean and powerful... but why does this guy's voice keep reminding me of fucking Tim Armstrong? What's wrong with me? I should be into this. I aspire to be into this. —Indiana Laub (Rockstar, arne@rockstarrecords.de, rockstarrecords.de)

WHITE ASS: Self-titled: LP

Due to dopey band name and peculiar *Warehouse: Songs and Stories*-esque packaging, I wouldn't've given this record a second glance had I encountered it in the wild, and this would have been to my life's detriment. These Parisian cellar-dwellers crank out a reverb-demented garage squall of such tangible meatiness that you'll swear you're bathing in guitars and as ■ result your complexion has improved noticeably. I've also found that this

record cannot possibly be turned down to ■ volume where it won't disturb others nearby, if you try it, the record just turns itself back up again. I guess there's ■ first time for everything: Earth surrenders to France! **BEST SONG:** "Fox Around." **BEST SONG TITLE:** "C'est la Merde." **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** This album cover uses the Cooper Black font, which I've hated for about thirty-five years. —Rev. Nørb (Frantic City, franticcity.free.fr)

WRIGGLE: Demo: Cassette

Being yelled at by a drunk guy while some people play music behind him, pretty much. **GRADE:** In the context of being yelled at by a drunk guy, A-. In the context of music, B-. —Bryan Static (Sorry State, sorrystaterecords.com)

WYATT BLAIR:

Banana Cream Dream: Cassette

This tape is bright yellow and transparent, which is ■ good indicator of what the music sounds like: catchy, sunny melodies with guitars, solid drums, and vocals that always have ■ part for you to ooh-ooh-ooooo along. —Bianca (Burger, burgerrecords.org / Lolipop, lolipoprecords.com)

YOLKS, THE: Kings of Awesome: LP

Pretty lofty title, but the album is pretty awesome (and really catchy). One side is packed full of loose bubblegum rockers that frolic along on an intimate slacker tip. Each one of 'em is as good

■ the next, and they got ■ honest and boyish sentiment. The other side is nothing but delightful rhythm and blues tracks, with nothin' slacker soundin' about 'em. Some of 'em sound like they coulda been half ■ century old or more (besides the "What'd I Say" cover, which is). They've even got keys! And use them well, conjuring Vince Guaraldi to mind—maybe that's just me because this makes me wanna dance like somebody from the Peanuts syndicate. Regardless, they're fantastic. The flipping of the record is all the transition you need between the two sides, despite their different patterns, as they are cut from the same distinct cloth (I guess they split live sets like this, too). For sure, one of the top new records I've heard this year. —Vincent (Randy, randyrerecords.bigcartel.com)

YOUR PEST BAND: Time to Go: LP

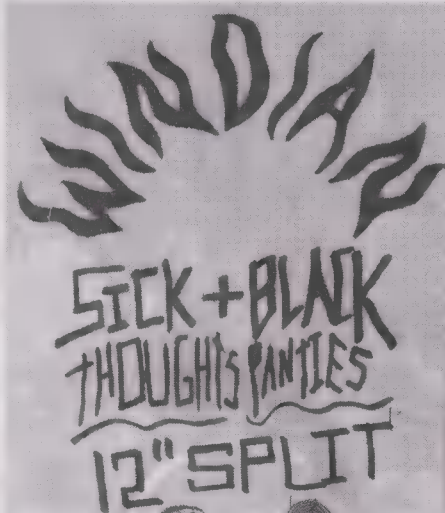
Your Pest Band used to stumble towards the Hickey side of melodicism, but with *Time to Go*, Fumito Yamazaki's howl has softened into a snarled pop propagator. YPB hasn't lost their touch, rather they have actualized the Teenegenerate/Testors vibe that was always present, but typically muddled under the mania. Highlights include "You Were the Rebel" and "Reverse," because although Your Pest Band has slowed down a bit, they are most memorable when they shout aphorisms. The next time a close friend puts down ■ guitar for ■ mind-numbing nine to five so ■ to satisfy someone else's expectations, I'll be sure to

remind them that, "You were ■ rebel, you killed all forever. But it's all over, now?" Ultimately, Your Pest Band still knows how to strike bone marrow. —Sean Arenas (Snuffy Smiles)

XX. Wanderlust: 7" single

Zex are, without a doubt, one of the best current bands making the rounds. Nailing down their sound in ■ one-size-fits-all descriptive is impossible. Early punk with strains of '70s glam and power pop, and I'm not entirely sure that's an apt description. Because when I listen to "Escape This Life" on the flip, I'm reminded of the mid to late 1980s when hardcore bands, particularly in the U.K. and some of the L.A. area bands, started treading poppier territory, or adding a little post-punk to their sound. The guitar dominates these songs, setting the tone. The A side is ■ little more tightly wound, with a chorus that instantly imprints itself on your brain, and will have you singing along. Then there's the guitar line towards the end of the song that recalls Buzzcocks that sends this over the f'n edge! One of those songs that makes you glad to be alive. This is definitely a band I will follow through their duration. As I understand it, they already have an LP and another single out, which I need to get. And so do you. —M.Avg (Wired For Sound, facebook.com/wfsrecords)

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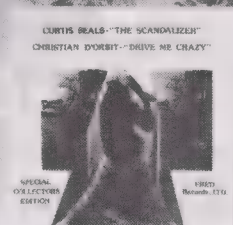
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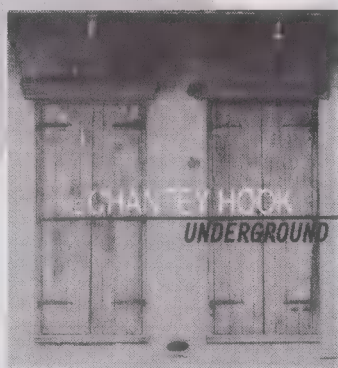
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"The illustration of
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worth the price."

THAT | NO HOPE

1055 MINUTES, \$7-10, 8" x 6", 68 pgs.

You take a playlist of every song you remember being impactful over the course of a year. You take that journal and you illustrate six songs every page, representing a week of your life. Sounds great! Sounds like a more structured *Snakepit*, or a more experimental *American Elf*! But, wait, there's not an actual narrative to follow. It's implied narrative, shown through emotions and content of the songs themselves. Snippets of lyrics will become inspirations for doodles, six per page. It turns out to be a little too literal for its own good, but I can't knock them any points for trying. The drawings aren't bad, but the content of the book gets a little repetitive by the end. An interesting experiment, I look forward to seeing what Pijpers does next. Grade: B. —Bryan Static (ampiipers.tumblr.com)

BEHIND THE WHEEL: A LYFT DRIVER'S LOG #2,

\$5, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 56 pgs.

I don't use ride shares. After growing up with a slightly paranoid Mexican grandmother who was fearful of me being murdered while at sleepovers with my school friends, I am wary of getting into even the most regulated cars with strangers. Through the drunken rants of my roommate's boyfriend about the evils of Uber—"They steal your information! They can always see your location!"—unfortunately, after checking out the suggested online supplementary reading, it seems that Lyft life is less than sweet. The unfair wages for drivers and company silencing of differing opinions about these policies has only strengthened my initial distaste for ridesharing. Clocking in at fifty-six pages of pure text, Dessaint's accounts offer a unique perspective to these rideshares that many people forget: the driver's point of view. I found myself worried that overly drunk riders would vomit in his car; I cringed when a couple used his backseat as their own personal makeout haven; and I clenched my teeth while reading the conversations between tech bros and conservative republicans. I commend Dessaint for his ability to navigate the waters, as these situations all seemed like torture to me. Above all, Dessaint is inarguably enamored with the idea of San Francisco: the art, the culture, the history. Yet, his experiences tell tales more of frustration with what the city has become in recent years, rather than the happiness of being in the city he's always loved. He and his wife live in nearby Oakland, as they cannot afford to live within San Francisco due to the influx of tech workers raising rent prices. The fact that his dream city is still a bridge away is a source of bitterness for Dessaint. I'll drive myself around, thank you. —Ashley Ravelo (Kelly Dessaint, PO Box 22974, Oakland, CA 94609, piltdownlad@gmail.com)

CERTAIN PEOPLE I DON'T KNOW Volume #6,

\$1 or trade, 4 1/4" x 5 1/2", copied, 9 pgs.

A short, short comic of weird characters the author saw driving the bus. It's humorous but way too short. It consists of nine one-panel pictures then, done. Another annoying thing is every other page is blank for no reason. If someone wants to hand something like this out to their friends, cool, but to make someone review it or expect someone to go to any trouble to get it just doesn't seem fair to me. I would suggest waiting for enough material and putting out a solid effort next time because the comics weren't bad. A good way to spend a very literal couple of minutes. —Craven Rock (aimeepijpers.net)

DREAMS OF DONUTS #20, \$2, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 54 pgs.

The layout of *Dreams of Donuts* is one of the best I've seen. The neat and even lettering and lovely panel borders that ranged from tiny hearts to railroad tracks made reading an ease and a delight. Each of the three autobiographical short illustrated stories became whimsical and fun through her detailed, black-line illustrations. I especially liked her punk perspective on movie reviews. For example, she gave *Predator 2* four out of five donuts because "Predators hate the cops as much as we do." —Ashley Ravelo (Heather Wreckage, 5867 San Pablo Ave, Oakland, CA 94608, all4choice@hotmail.com)

EFF'D UP #2, \$?, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 48 pgs.

This is the second installment of Robin's serial resource both for her own efforts at sobriety as well as anyone else who could use some help. The format of zines as a resource and semi-public forum makes a lot of sense, especially for this subject matter. Both (zines, substance use/abuse) run deep through punk and counterculture, and so having an easy and accessible way to pick many brains and experiences from our own ranks produces pretty helpful results. This issue packs a lot more muscle than the last one, with interviews, stories, tips for socializing, essays, and art that present a fairly wide spectrum of experience and subject matter, rather than one simple, linear, "This is how you quit drinking/using drugs." For example, one interview concentrates on the interplay between the subject's mental health and community activism, both of which are in no way tangential to substance use, either as concern or as constructive activity. Another interview goes from the (thankfully) established practice of needle exchanges, towards brainstorming up a dog-walking service explicitly for people to get clean through. And sitting over all this are the efforts of the editor herself, whose writing for this issue demonstrates a more acrid, visceral clarity (first issue was at the beginning of her sobriety, this one comes one hundred days in), as she, through compiling and writing this, once again works furiously at something new that is useful and fulfilling, rather than surrendering to old, destructive patterns. A great resource and highly recommended. —Dave Brainwreck (r0bin@riseup.net)

FEEDBACK #13, \$2, 5 1/2" x 6", copied, 36pgs.

Feedback is a simple comics zine chronicling part of the music scene in Portland, OR through show posters and one-three page comic reenactments. This issue is a special issue. "The Catch Up Issue," because our author prefaces the zine with an anecdote about the changing lifestyle a first-time father experiences with so little time to go to shows and write zines. I feel lucky that we are getting something so dense and expressive. The comics are fun and Isaacson isn't afraid to poke fun at himself and the music scene he's apart of. It reminds me of the many nights that go by wishing I would go out to more shows but more and more I've chosen to stay in. If I read more zines like this, I would more than likely get out of my goddamn apartment. —Simon Sotelo (jhnisaacson@gmail.com)

LIKE FIGHTING THE OCEAN, \$4, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 80 pgs.

In the words of Paul Renn: "This zine is about punk rock and skateboarding, that's it. They are inseparably linked in my mind..." Renn's compulsion to keep skating and being punk into his thirties

is ■ testament to the power of DIY culture as an alternative to banal mainstream society. Hey, as Renn states, “Age is no excuse to suck at life.” Although his sentiments are enough to win me over, the zine also features accounts of other thirtysomething skaters, interviews with Max from Scholastic Deth, one of my favorite bands, and Brian from Night Birds, and Renn’s tour journal with Reservoir. Although Max is no longer an active musician, he’s a history professor who encourages subversive ideas in the classroom. Although Brian is a father, he continues to tour and perform live with Night Birds. Ultimately, the skater anecdotes and interviews echo a similar theme: If you love something, don’t give it up because society says you should have grown out of it. *Like Fighting the Ocean* is an outstanding reminder to ignore the naysayers and keep at what makes you happy. —Sean Arenas (Paul Renn, 1919 San Pablo Ave. Apt. #108 Oakland, CA 94612, paulrenn1984@gmail.com)

NO HOPE, \$5, 5 ½” x 8”, printed, 24 pgs.

If you’re not familiar with the work of Marcos Siref, he has an illustration in pretty much every issue of this zine. Even did the cover of #74. He’s published comics in *As You Were* #2 and #3. And has done cover art for *The Chill Dawgs*, *Spokenest*, and the *Lenguas Largas / Mind Spiders Sister Series*. With those projects he typically has some kind of prompt, but *No Hope* is his own beast, and it’s a wild one. There’s some crazy shit in here. It’s fuckin’ awesome. I mean, the illustration of the sperm

clip art, and what have you. It looks awesome! There’s ■■ ecstatic tour diary with his friends in the band Dipshit and a couple of other inspiring tales of travel and fun and being young and punk. The author’s so down with the cause he lists his phone number! —Craven Rock (colinquack@live.com)

SPIDDER #17, 8 ½” x 5 ½”, copied, 20 pgs.

Within a nice homey design of cut ‘n’ paste and comic illustration are some personal stories and writing from an old school (as in ‘80s old school) skater. He covers ■ vast range of topics, like friends who tried to recruit him into a quixotic hunting down of William S. Burroughs and Hasil Adkins and coming back with more than enviable results. Most of the pieces end up coming back around to skating, not just because it’s his favorite thing but also because he uses it as an existential and philosophical theme. The author has a deep connection to the sport in a zen sort of way, making for a deep and thoughtful read. A must read for skaters. Recommended for everyone else. —Craven Rock (Jamie, 1925 Hwy. 69 S, Savannah, TN 38372)

STAYING IN, 8 ½” x 5 ½”, copied, 12 pgs.

A young New Jersey punk writes about his experiences going to shows and getting out and living life. Not bad—lots of descriptions of bands and good times at shows—certainly not groundbreaking or anything,

“She gave *Predator 2* four out of five donuts because *Predators* hate the cops as much as we do.”

—Ashley Ravala | *TABLET OF DONUTS #20*

trying to fertilize the piece of pizza?!?! That alone is worth the price. Pick it up! —Daryl (Marcos Siref, <http://upthameex.wordpress.com>)

PSYCHO.MOTO #21, \$2, 5 ½” x 8 ½”, copied, 24 pgs.

This is the “family” issue of a long-running zine springing from the Antagonist Art’s Movement (which highlights new, obscure artists and writers who challenge the mainstream). This is the only exposure I’ve gotten to this particular “art movement,” and while their opening creed is a position I unexceptionally respect, I was hoping for a little more challenge in the subject matter. A lot of this issue consists of cute, endearing, sentimental stories about the authors’ families (accepting Dad, then funny Dad, then an accepting and funny Dad). Plenty of fucked-up families have ran soldering irons around in people’s lives, but I don’t think it’s only legitimate to present that—it’s very real to recognize and appreciate the functional and positive aspects of your own family. I was just left feeling like I’d eavesdropped on someone’s conversation with a good friend, and not with any of the mental or emotional exhilaration that I try to get from art. There are also fanzine reviews and a pretty decent interview with two Iranian street artists who now reside in New York City. —Dave Brainwreck (antagovision.com/psycho-moto-zine-archive, pmzsubmissions@gmail.com)

PURE ENTERTAINMENT #1, \$10, 7 ½” x 5”, 72 pgs.

A wildly varying collection of comics. Quite a few of them remind me of older comic masters. There are two strips specifically that ape the styles of George Herriman (Krazy Kat) and Will Eisner. Some of the strips are way better than others, but they’re from many different eras and artists, so it’s hard to compare most of them to each other. One complaint that I can’t get past is that the book is too small for some of the art included. There’s nothing wrong with digest size, but some of this art looks squashed! Grade: B-. —Bryan Static (75 Byram Lake Rd., Mount Kisco, NY 10549, lookmomcomics.com)

RABBIT, RABBIT, RABBIT #3, 7” x 8 ½”, copied, 20 pgs.

This is an awesome old school-style zine with crappy drawings, legibly handwritten sections, and typed-up and glued-around photocopier art,

but the author has ■ fresh voice, ■ bright-eyed and bushytailed view of the (his) world, and ■ buttload of potential. Plan on *Staying In*. —Craven Rock (No address listed)

TURNTABLE TOUR: OCTOBER 2014,

5 ½” x 8 ½”, copied, 12 pgs.

This zine is to accompany this fall’s Turntable Tour, ■ four-city travelling visual art show featuring work by punk stalwarts Tim Kerr, Chris Shary, Kepi Ghoulie, and more. Within these mere twelve pages you get illustrations of the artists, as well as some background on their practices, and some quick interviews. Though I wasn’t able to attend one of the shows (they all took place in the South), I am familiar with these people’s art and found the content of the zine a nice accompaniment to my existing appreciation of their artistic output. But what I especially like about the zine is that it not only featured the people whose work was in the show, but also talked about some of the people who were helping set up the shows. A true testament to how community-oriented this project was. If the Turntable Tour ever finds its way to your neck of the woods, definitely check it out! —Daryl (RF Daniel, 712 O’Shaughnessy Ave., Huntsville, AL 35801, thorsbypress@gmail.com)

WELCOME TO THE CULTURAL ÆTHER #9,

\$1 ppd., 8 ½” x 5 ½”, 24 pgs.

Another visually stunning ish. Collages with text are very precisely done. The texts are longer form this time and have to do with religion, mostly. It kind of bothered me that there is no attribution given to the authors of the texts. The zine’s editor says it is because ideas should be spread, not the author’s fame. I have to say that I liked it better when shorter bits of text were used in the collages. One of the text bits is in such a tiny font that it hurts my eyes. Still, many of the pages are very artfully done and this zine is definitely worth the price. —Lisa Weiss (The Cultural Æther, 2440 E. Tudor Rd. #364, Anchorage, AK 99507)



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Beyond the Music:

How Punks are Saving the World with DIY Ethics, Skills and Values
Edited by Joe Biel 191 pgs.

I was beyond thrilled when I pulled this book out of the mailbox. I believe that this is what punk rock is all about—using the tools we learned in punk rock to make the world a better place. The essay, “The Virus That Cures,” by Mark Anderson, which closes the book, is worth the cover price alone. This essay is not only inspiring, but it details the journey of a punk rocker from teenager to adult. Anderson writes, “The journey started with the music, but could never end there. It always

class and in bed and between shifts at work. By holding Rick’s zine in my hands, it opened a gateway into his everyday life filtered through his nerdy predilections and goofy sense of humor. As Rick admits, the early strips are roughly drawn, yet they are chock-full of earnestness and insightful observations. But he develops as an artist throughout the collection. In fact, Rick acknowledges that years of practice have made his lines more confident, although he has not lost any of his simplistic charm. Even if you lack artistic expertise, personal expression is a muscle that anyone can flex. Rick has exercised his muscles by documenting his local punk scene and his trials and tribulations in maintaining DIY space 1919 Hemphill.

Ultimately, photocopied zines are as pertinent now as ever. They counteract slowly dissociating human interactions, which are partially a result of digital communication. Look, I’m not a Luddite, but why simply see someone’s inner self expressed when you can feel it. Rick has put himself on the printed page for us to engage with him. I, for one, treasure the spot on my shelf he now occupies as it suggests that heartfelt, independent comics are something worth cherishing. There’s nothing fleeting about *Big Oldie*. —Sean Arenas (Secret Sailor, PO Box 2312, Bloomington, IN 47402)

Copypat and a Litter of Other Cats

By David Yow, 160 pgs.

When people think of Jesus Lizard frontman David Yow, they generally think of heaving, soul-rending vocals, spasmodic stage moves, broken-bottle lyrics and, of course, groin origami. But unabashed Feline Adoration? Up till now, I would’ve guessed that the only connection between Yow and cats is that he catches them down by the railroad tracks and grinds them up, fur and all, to make his homemade bologna. And that he probably uses kitty litter as a sort of “dry” shampoo. But as this book of his cat cartoons demonstrates, behind the lead singer’s twistedly sinister persona there lies, somewhat like William Burroughs, a cat lover. That’s a twist more surprising

Jesus Lizard frontman David Yow, a cat lover.

That’s a twist more surprising than any of the balloon animals that he’s tied his genitals into over the years.

—Aphid Peewit, *Copypat and a Litter of Other Cats*

pointed beyond, past teenage tribes... punk inspired me to [pursue] knowledge and truth...”

Beyond the Music isn’t a book of nostalgia. Instead, this is a collection of stories, essays, and interviews detailing the journey of people within punk rock and focusing on what they are involved with presently.

Thankfully, this is not a collection of the usual punk rock celebrity, go-to voices. Although there are a few sprinkled throughout the book, the crux of the book revolves around real voices from real people doing real things. This is incredibly inspiring and highly recommended. —Steve Hart (Cantankerous Titles, PO Box 14322, Portland, OR. 97293)

Big Oldie: A Collection of Comic Zines

By Rick V., 89 pgs.

The digital age of autobiographical comics is here in a big, bad way. Many artists find their work trending on Tumblr and Instagram, a vast desert of fleeting digital content. Yet, most artists would agree that printed zines and bound collections are a preferable interaction between creator and reader as it develops a tactile relationship, which connects with our personal history and not simply our browser’s.

As such, I read most of Rick V.’s collection, *Big Oldie*, before

than any of the balloon animals that he’s tied his genitals into over the years.

But if you’re imagining a collection of darkly sardonic and deeply haunting Hieronymus Bosch-like cat-populated illustrations, banish the thought. The only word that applies here is: CUTE. These are simple, one-panel color cartoon illustrations that work off of cat-themed puns and they’re simply as cute as a bug’s ear. No getting around it. It is not an exaggeration to say that each of these could seriously be used for a line of cute greeting cards for people of the cat fancier persuasion.

So now we know that the feral, naked, screaming punk rock man with the dark motives has a soft fuzzy Hallmark card side to him to rival any of the packaged tenderness that Taylor Swift can offer up. Life just got weirder by a notch or two.

My only complaint is—probably in keeping with my Luddite leanings—the obvious “digital art” feel that the illustrations have. I would be much happier if Yow would get out of Photoshop, get some actual paints and canvases, and use real hairballs coughed up by his cats for his brushes. But I’m not going to be presumptuous enough to tell an artist how to work his magic, particularly an artist who seems capable, at any second, of suddenly lunging at me and ripping my Adam’s apple out of my throat with his sharp yellow teeth.

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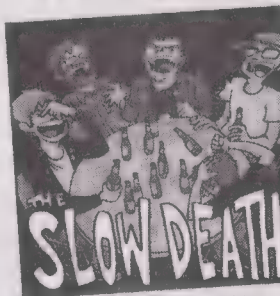
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Mitch Clem and Nation of Amanda are back with another action-packed installment of Turnstile Comix! This time around, we follow indie rock superstars Lemuria on a harrowing international tour.

Watch as they traverse the vast landscape of Russia, dodging roves of violent Nazis, crooked cops, mobster shadowmen,

gunshots, a tropical storm, rabid dogs, and a substandard German pizza! It's an insane true story you have to read to believe.

PLUS, of course, we've got a 7" of brand new Lemuria tracks produced by none other than Mark Ryan himself The Marked Men, Radioactivity, etc. Lemuria's earnest and off-center indie pop mixed with Mark's stripped-down garagey production makes for a truly wild and exciting batch of songs.

So here we go, everyone! Get ready to laugh and cry and dance and be sure to drink plenty of water, because your favorite cartoonists and your favorite band are here to make your life seem almost worth living for a precious little!

*

We've also got brand new art stuff from Liz Suburbia, Nation Of Amanda, Lindsay Watson and Lauren Monger, and new re-pressed vinyl from Larry And His Flask and Blackbird Raum



We are lucky to find ourselves in a universe so prone to barfing up things of genuine oddness from time to time. And *Copycat* is one such thing. This book is, I'm sure, bound for a hallowed spot in the Museum of the Odd, alongside GG Allin's touching letters to his mom, Michael Jackson's false nose, and Eleanor Roosevelt's mummified penis collection. —Aphid Peewit (Akashic Books, akashicbooks.com)

King Shit

By Brian Alan, Illustrated By Waylon Thornton, 44 pgs.

King Shit reminds me of a few nights out at the bar that were more trouble than they were worth. That night you didn't quite regret, but if you could have stayed at home would you? Probably not. It's been a while since I was a person who's long since wanted to get into a drunken heap of trouble every week. *King Shit* took me back. After each chapter, I was glad to momentarily step out of the bar and away from the vomit- and piss-lined bathrooms that colored my past. The book is short and it reads like a series of short stories at first—stories that just happen to be part of the same storyline—and occur in chronological order. It doesn't take long to get through a night

transforming society. Spotting it as a recommended book by the staff during my visit to Powell's books, I was more than happy to support such a small scale publication willing to give a platform to those who couldn't find one.

There are many things that this second volume of *Red Skies at Night* does right, but before we get to those, I would like to address some of the problems. First of all is the presentation. Although *Red Skies at Night* is well-printed, the layout and design are a bit crude and amateurish, with an unusual choice of font, poorly formatted articles, and low resolution images. Of course, it's the content that's most important, but I'm confident that anarchists are able to put together a publication a professional looking as the "big boys."

However, there are bright spots in *Red Skies at Night* in the final two essays (and thankfully also the longest ones)—"Whose Strike" and "Fighting for the Future"—where the writers give itemized ideas on how to go about being more involved in your community and liberating movements. These essays consider topics such as the fast food strikes, generally how to organize locally, what cautions we should take when we choose to participate in them and how to identify and approach its

"You're a puzzle piece that was thrown into the wrong box, but that didn't stop anyone from forcing you to fit in... Long story short: kids are assholes."

—Simon Sotelo, *Tomboy*

mis-happenings with our main character Elvis (King Shit) Macalister. Most of the characters are enjoyable weirdos all functioning as part of the same dysfunctional world and nothing seems too far fetched to have been real—at least not after the things I've seen. —Simon Sotelo (House Of Vlad Productions)

Raising Hell

By Norman Spinrad, 108 pgs.

Spinrad is best-known for his science fiction. His novel *The Void Captain's Tale* is great, but any summary is going to make it sound horrible. Here, I'll try: it's about life on a spaceship that's powered by a woman's orgasm. See? But the story works. And his novel *The Iron Dream* "purports" to be a sword-and-sorcery novel penned by Adolf Hitler—another doubtful premise, but that story works, too.

Raising Hell is part of PM Press's Outspoken Authors series, in which, according to the company, writers "present their most provocative work in a [format] designed to fit in your pocket and stretch your mind."

Spinrad's book comes reasonably close to the mind-stretching part with its essay, "The Abnormal New Normal." The essay, while ultimately a manifesto for political and economic action, is essentially American History Since the Civil War in Twenty Pages. For me, it crystallized my understanding of how the Republican Party went from being the party of Abraham Lincoln to being the fraternity house of doorstops and arsonists.

Whether you're someone for whom the cost of higher education is mind-stretchingly prohibitive, or you're tired of being the person who's always joking about your ignorance of history, "The Abnormal New Normal" would make a sturdy cornerstone for a DIY education.

The book shares its title with its opening novella, in which Hell's damned souls organize a union and go on strike—it's pretty good, in a '50s *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* kind of way. —Jim Woster (PM Press, PO Box 23912, Oakland, CA 94623, pmpress.org)

Red Skies at Night:

Journal of Revolutionary Strategy and Praxis Issue 2

By Various Authors, 104 pgs

Red Skies at Night is a publication based in Portland, Oregon that collects writings focusing on anarchist/communist strategies for

moving parts, how a militant faction must always be encouraged, how organizations (whether revolutionary or not) cannot remain stagnant and must expand regardless of possible internal conflicts, and, what might be the largest hurdle to overcome—finding the right people who are dedicated. It's these actual concrete examples which make these articles a highlight and make them stand out. In addition, there is also a letters column where targets of the previous issue are given a chance to address criticisms directed towards them.

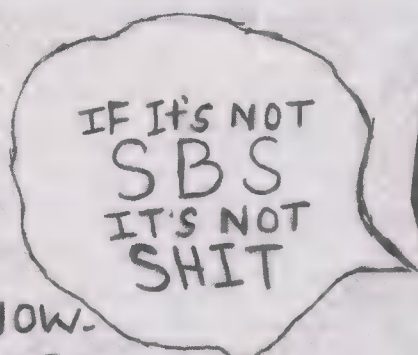
Red Skies at Night is not the perfect publication and has room for improvement. However, there are still informative and worthwhile essays in this second volume. —Ollie Mikse (Red Skies At Night, PO Box 4024, Portland, OR 97208)

Tomboy

By Liz Prince, 255 pgs.

Have you ever felt alone? Not lonely, but during those tough times you had no one to relate to, as if you were the only one of your kind? You're a puzzle piece that was thrown into the wrong box, but that didn't stop anyone from forcing you to fit in. Liz Prince does an amazing job chronicling the uncomfortable and alienating childhood she experienced being a girl and wearing boy's clothes. Not to be confused with a boy trapped in a girl's body, but rather not finding value, necessity, or truth in the constructs girls are forced into their whole lives. There are some girls who will prefer action movies and toy trucks instead of pink flowers and fairy wings, but what are the chances that these tomboys will be able feel normal? Long story short: kids are assholes. Being a kid is hard even for those who feel like they fit into gender norms. *Tomboy* is a real page-turner, full of fun nostalgia and heartbreaking memories that remind me of my own boyish childhood. The only downside I found in this book was that it ended way too fast. Liz Prince is a great storyteller—it's not just because her childhood was similar to mine—she brings the right amount of wit, humor, and realism to every panel. —Simon Sotelo (ZestBooks.net)





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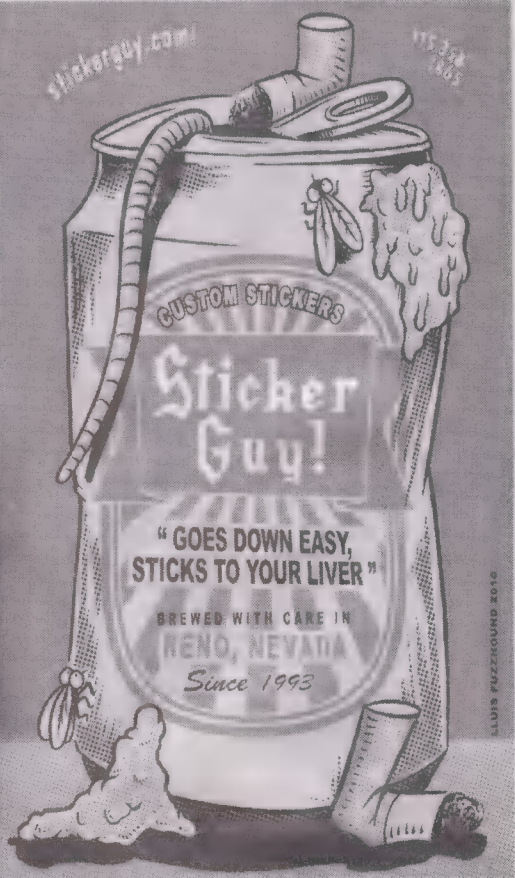
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East End Babylon: The Story of the Cockney Rejects: DVD

The Cockney Rejects held a strong fascination for me when I was a young punker in the early 1980s. Part of the reason, I reckon, is because I could find so little information about 'em back then—they weren't covered in U.S. papers all that much, if at all, and my steady supply of fanzines was initially limited to *Flipside*, and black-rhino rare issues of *Generations* (or at least that's the name I remember of a short-lived tabloid-sized rag put out by the BYO folks), *Zig Zag*, *No Mag*, and *MRR* that happened to make its way into Montebello's Roadhouse Records—and part of it was because what they were singing about struck a deep chord.

Sure, they hailed from London's East End, but take away the football references and the Cockney accents and they could've been from the

“Sure, they hailed from London's East End, but take away the football references and the Cockney accents and they could've been from the same part of East L.A. I was from.”

—Jimmy Alvarado, *East End Babylon: The Story of the Cockney Rejects*

same part of East L.A. I was from, judging from all the straight talk about asshole cops, fighting, and street-level snapshots of poverty condition lives peppered across their first two albums. This film is essentially tailor-made for that kid I was, and the history-obsessed adult I've become.

The core story recounted here is that of the band—a cabal of street rats mostly too young to even vote in the U.S. who put out a remarkable slew of hard-edged and humorous tunes over a scant few years before joining the lamentable slog of punk bands flexing their inner metal musings—but director Richard England prudently weaves their tale into both nearly a hundred years of the East End itself and the family history of main protagonists (and brothers) Jeff “Stinky” Turner and Mick Geggus.

The film follows the full arc of both band and brothers—early success, their disillusion with punk, the metal years, the band's dissolution, Stinky's turn as a boxer, and the band's rebirth and resurgent popularity—along with bits about the football fanaticism to which the band was tied; the early oi movement woefully disserved by Britain's creepy, caustic tabloids; and the greater world in which the band was distilled.

The editing is tight, and the visuals are peppered with lots of historical footage and photos of both the band and the East End itself and limits the number of “talking heads” seen throughout; never a bad thing. This is a veritable cornucopia of awesomeness for the fan, but, more importantly, it is a film that has been executed in such a way that the most casual viewer who's never heard of the Rejects would likely find something of interest to glom onto if they happened on it while flipping through the channels some late evening. —Jimmy Alvarado (Cadiz Music, cadizmusic.co.uk)

Hardcore Norfolk: A Story of Rock'n'Roll Survival: DVD

Where's Norfolk? About two hours from Richmond. You know, where bands like Avail and GWAR and Strike Anywhere are from, where all the best bands find a way to play while on tour. Not that many made the ninety-mile detour from the Richmond-to-Chapel-Hill route, but if they had they would have found some crazy kids making music despite the conservative, military nature of the town.

I will admit that I am a little biased because I first got to know *Hardcore Norfolk* back in 1984, when I bought my first punk rock records at a Skinnies, a Norfolk record store that has refused to die. There were flyers for shows at a place called Connection Hall. Hardcore Norfolk was a loose-knit group of friends who put on shows, played shows, and went to shows at this place in the back of a beauty parlor. I was a few years from getting my driver's license and I lived in Virginia Beach, the next town over. The venue was in a “bad” neighborhood so forget a ride from the parental unit or anyone else's parental units. Bus service was a joke. I had no hope of going. The venue closed a few years later but the music didn't stop.

Hardcore or punk bands make up about two-third of the music featured here. The movie chronicles all kinds of self-promoted music in Norfolk, starting in the late '50s. Shiptown Records was Norfolk's answer to Motown. There was a lively soul music scene along Church Street, with clubs that embraced black performers during the era of de facto segregation. In the '60s, Norfolk had more sailors than hippies and several rockers refined their chops while in Vietnam. A jangle-pop band called Waxing Poetics and indie-rockers Antic Hay from the late 1980s and early '90s also get a fair bit of coverage.

In the 1980s, Virginia Beach aggressively banned backyard skateboard ramps so a committed group of skaters got the first public vert ramp built at Mount Trashmore. At that time skateboarding was punk's gateway drug, so a lively scene grew up around skateboarding, with bands like The Faction and JFA making that ninety-mile detour.

Probably the most well-known band featured here is The Candy Snatchers, who toured extensively and got themselves on the cover of *Maximum Rock'n'roll* in the late 1990s. Of course, this film can't be everything to everybody so some bands are left out and some maybe get too much time, but that's the nature of music documentaries.

This was a great trip down memory lane for me but what if you are one

of those people who don't know that it's pronounced “Nawfuk”? The story of *Hardcore Norfolk* is your story if you grew up in a shitty town, lived for music, and hung out with the few people who understood you. —Lisa Weiss (hardcorenorfolk.com, debra@hardcorenorfolk.com)

Looking for Johnny: The Legend of Johnny Thunders: DVD

Director Danny Garcia is a huge Johnny Thunders fan. Huge. I mean, Garcia made this film about the guy, so it's fairly obvious. With that said, his fandom is *Looking for Johnny*'s biggest flaw. Throughout, Garcia simply cannot get out of his own way, and the directorial choices he makes (and doesn't make) hobble what might have otherwise been an interesting story.

For one, it never feels as if Garcia has a clear sense of what he's trying to do in the film. Sure, he's trying to tell the story of this guy who was in the New York Dolls and the Heartbreakers, a guitarist who died under dubious circumstances, but after watching this multiple times I'm left confused. There are parts of the film—the expository parts—that feel unreasonably rushed. Worse, I have no idea what the hurry is.

Early on in the career of the Dolls, for example, drummer Billy Murcia chokes on hot coffee in a British bathtub after well-meaning bumbler try to revive him from an overdose. The film talks about how sad the event was, how vital Murcia was to the band, and prior to that moment *the dude is barely even mentioned*. It's as if director Garcia is ticking off items from a checklist throughout this film, like he's trying to get plot points out of the way.

This happens a little later on in the film when Thunders' band Gang War is briefly mentioned—I had no idea that Thunders played with Wayne

Kramer from the MC5! Unfortunately, I don't know much more than this, because, again, the whole thing is dealt with in less than a minute, as if another box is being checked off. Despite this, we're told about the band's potential and whatnot—*told*, rather than Garcia using exposition to develop the point.

And the same thing happens again later: Stiv Bators of the Dead Boys is briefly in cahoots with Thunders in a band setting, but Bators dies, Thunders is devastated, and any number of aging New York scenesters tell us how the whole thing was. What Garcia misses, or ignores, is that a bunch of talking heads telling us how important people are does not get the

on heroin, a bunch of people talking about how affecting his music was, occasional discussions of the man's musical habits (though there's precious little in the way of performance throughout—there's often grainy footage of a band while someone or other talks over music playing in the background, but not the music the band in said footage is playing—this is especially the case for the first half of the film), and an overall sense of worship and reverence that I just do not get.

It's great to hear from photographer Bob Gruen and Sylvain Sylvain, one of the two original surviving Dolls, but the assembled cast often feels scraped together, as if the director would take anyone available, and as if they're

“A bunch of talking heads telling us how important people are does not get the point across. This is a documentary: we want to be shown through footage and interviews.”

—Michael T. Fournier *Looking for Johnny: The Legend of Johnny Thunders*

point across. This is a documentary: we want to be *shown* through footage and interviews.

I get that the footage Garcia uses throughout must have been a labor of love, one that induced much salivation when rare or never-before-seen stuff was unearthed, but the choices to use said clips are being made at the expense of a cohesive narrative. Jeez, even Thunders' death (or was it murder?) in a New Orleans hotel room feels rushed, though I assumed (incorrectly) Garcia was sprinting through the rest of the film to dig deep into the incident like a punk rock *Unsolved Mysteries*. Nope.

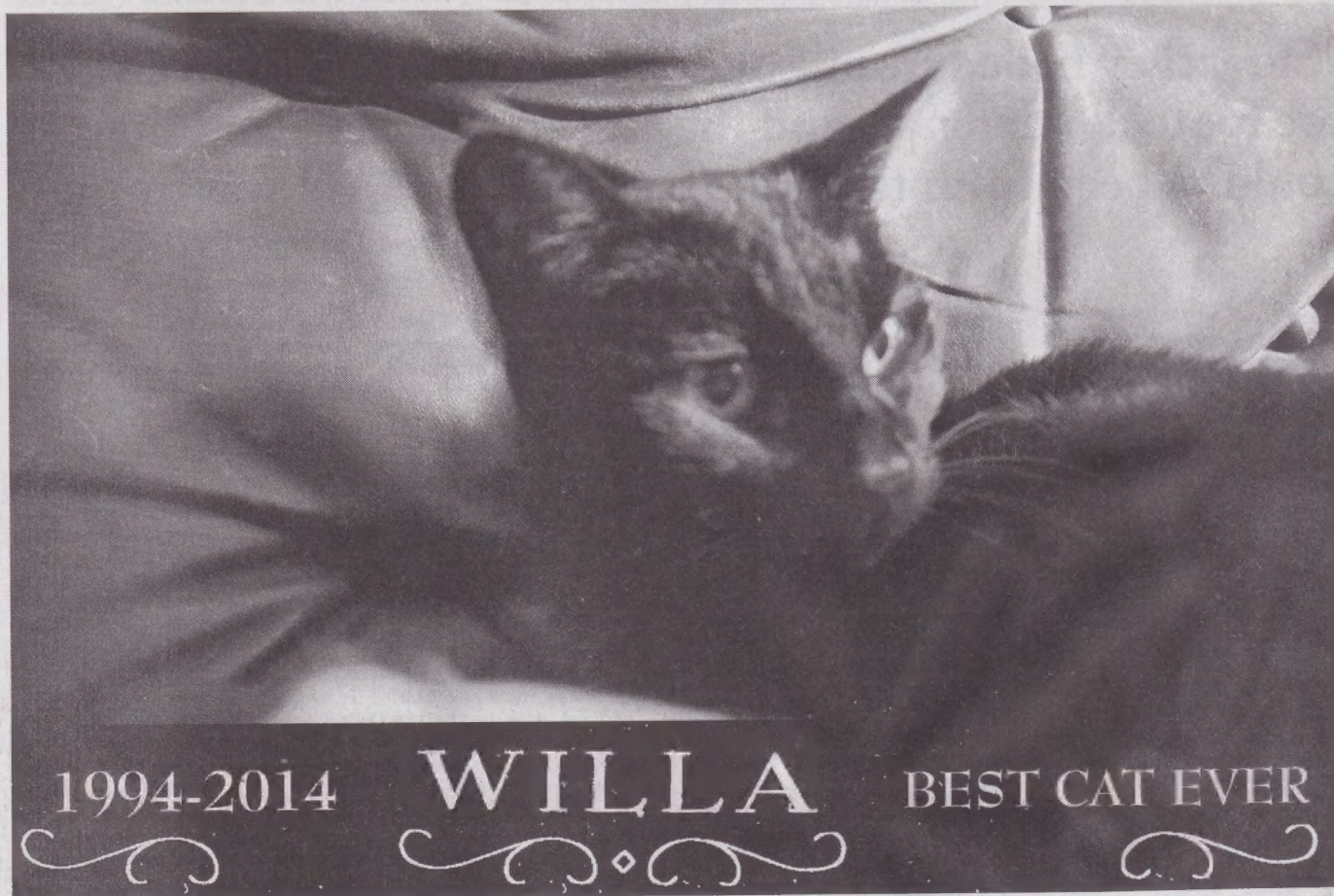
So what's the rush, then? Why are so many seemingly salient points skimmed over? Beats me, because a majority of this film feels like sitting through a bunch of Johnny Thunders' uninteresting associates blathering on. There's a fair amount of canoodling about how Thunders got wasted

grateful to be on camera to tell their story. It just doesn't feel authoritative narratively, especially since the important bits seem glossed over in favor of....well, nothing. He left too soon, got too fucked up, repeat.

The reason I was psyched to watch this in the first place was to find out why there was so much mystique about Johnny Thunders—there's surely more to it than the whole “live fast, die young” thing, right? Unfortunately, I have no idea at the end of the movie: the aforementioned scenesters who narrate the film seem to dictate the film's flow, rather than the director having a strong vision and asking questions to get the answers he was looking for. What we're left with is a cipher—over which any number of people fawn and preen—and a missed opportunity. 🍷

—Michael T. Fournier (No address listed)

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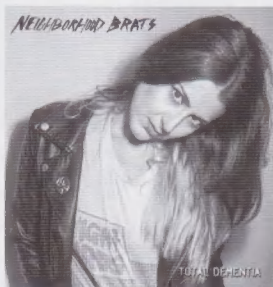
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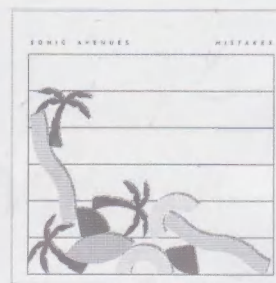
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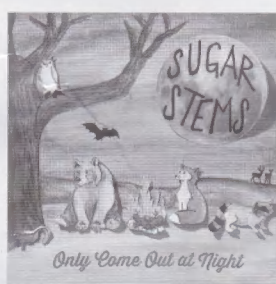
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